

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

Wicca Revealed:
A First Year Within
The Craft
By
Pino Longchild

© This work is copyright of Pino Longchild, 2007. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the author.

Acknowledgements

A huge debt of gratitude goes to Deirdre Hebert who extremely generously volunteered to read and edit the entire manuscript. She made many grammatical corrections, a number of changes to cumbersome phrases, some factual corrections and suggestions on how to make some of the sections clearer. She has had a consistently keen eye for all these things that have slipped past my attention.

I would also like to acknowledge those students at Magicka School who have written to me from time to time, pointing out inconsistencies and things that were unclear in the On-line course of *Wicca Revealed*.

Great thanks go as well to my wife, Chantal Santos, with whom I discussed many of the ideas within the book.

Please Note: All dates are given using the convention CE (Common Era, equivalent to *Anno Domini* or AD) and BCE (Before Common Era, equivalent to Before Christ or BC).

Preface

The release of this book may not please everyone as it contains the entirety of the *Wicca Revealed* On-line syllabus at www.magickaschool.com. Many who are on that course like the idea of the lessons being released once a month and the fact that students are encouraged to take an entire year over what amounts to the equivalent of a coven First Degree. This book will be seen by some to negate the value of this approach as students can now go through the whole thing in a matter of days. And to be fair, this is, of course, a danger. However, those that do this will have gained little. Wicca is not a thing to be hurried and in a world of “instant everything”, stands firmly against the mainstream of popular Western Culture. This book is not intended to allow students to crib and become Witches in a week. Rather, it has been made available in the hope that it will provide a useful complimentary resource to the On-line offerings. No longer will students have to resort to printing off the web pages and re-format them in a word-processor. The book’s organisation also means that students will be easily able to revisit areas that they wish to look at again.

I sincerely hope that *Wicca Revealed* kindles an aspiration to become a Witch, but more than this I hope that through its emphasis on research projects and doing things for oneself that it will help to create Witches who think for themselves and who have excellent skills and knowledge.

The original twelve lesson structure has been kept throughout. Most lessons contain a main topic as well as a research project and exercises. Footnotes can be found at the end of each chapter, as can any appendices. For reasons of production costs, the course exams have been omitted.

Pino Longchild

May 7th, 2007

Contents

Use of this Book, P.9

Chapter One, P.11

General Beliefs, Practices and History

General Beliefs and Practices. History of Wicca. Different Traditions. Key Personalities.

Research Project: Research a Tradition.

Exercises: The Tree. Pentagram Visualisation.

Notes

Chapter Two, P.43

The Goddess and God of the Witches

Wiccan Attitudes Towards Deity. The Great Wheel of the Year. The Deities of the Witches. The Divine Feminine. The Divine Masculine. A Variety of Goddesses and Gods.

Research Project: Find out about a Deity.

Exercises: The Cleansing Rain. Casting a Spell.

Notes

Chapter Three, P.73

Ceremonial Basics

The Opening of the Temple. Preparing the Space. The Altar. Casting the Circle. Consecration of the Cakes and Ale. Taking Down the Temple. The Opening of the Temple, Coven Version.

Research Project: Working on the Opening Ceremony.

Exercises: Physical Exercise. The Will

Notes

Chapter Four, P.101

Magical Tools and Garb

Tools of the Trade. Consecration.

Research Project: Tools and Clothing.

Exercises: The Candle. The Light Within. Projecting Consciousness

Notes

Chapter Five, P.125

The Art of Magic

The Art of Magic. Basic Skills. Different Ways to Make Magic. A Ten Point Magical Key. More Advanced Magical Work.

Research Project: Organising Magic Effectively.

Exercises: The Energy of Life. Fruit in the Hand.

Notes

Chapter Six, P.149

Esbats and Moon Magic

Ideas for a Structure. Just for Covens. Games. Moon Magic. The Moon in History and Religion. The Moon in Astrology.

Research Project: Finding Out about the Moon.

Exercises: To See the Aura. To Sense the Aura. Manipulating the Aura to Heal.

Notes

Chapter Seven, P.175

The Lesser Sabbats, Part One: The Solstices

Midsummer Solstice or Litha. Modern Summer Solstice Celebrations. Midsummer Solstice Ceremony. Midwinter Solstice Ceremony. Making the Solstice Seasons Special.

Research Project: Solstice Events.

Exercises: The Making of Herbal Charms.

Notes

Appendices: Midsummer and Midwinter Rituals for Covens or Families.

Chapter Eight, P.207

The Lesser Sabbats, Part Two: The Equinox

What is an Equinox? Spring Equinox. Relevant Gods and Goddesses. Elements from the Gardnerian Book of Shadows. Spring Equinox Ceremony. Autumn Equinox or Mabon.

Research Project: Studying the Time of the Equinoxes.

Exercises: Psychic Balance. Developing Intuition. Prediction Skills. Psychometry.

Notes

Appendix: Designing Rituals.

Chapter Nine, P.231

The Greater Sabbats, Part One: Imbolg and Beltane

Imbolg. Imbolg Ceremony. Beltane. Beltane Ceremony.

Research Project: Finding out about Imbolg and Beltane.

Exercises: Ritual Baths. Chakras.

Notes

Chapter Ten, P. 257

The Greater Sabbats, Part Two: Lughnasadh and Samhain

Lughnasadh. Lughnasadh Celebration. Samhain. Party Ideas. Remembering the Dead. Samhain Ceremony.

Research Project: Attitudes Towards Death

Exercises: Choosing a Craft Name. A New Wiccan Tool.

Notes

Appendix: Making Bread.

Chapter Eleven, P.281

Wiccan Beliefs about the Levels of Being

Levels of Being. Kabbalah. Psychological Theories. Occult and Scientific Viewpoints. Terms Used in the Theory of Levels. First Steps to Travelling on the Astral Plane. The Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram.

Research Project: The Archangels.

Notes

Chapter Twelve, P. 309

Self Dedication, Initiation and some Final Thoughts

Final Choices. Dedication. Initiation. Preparation. Dedication and Initiation Ceremonies. Controversial Issues.

Research Project: Looking Forwards, Looking Back.

Exercises: Housekeeping. Past, Present and Future.

Notes

Glossary, P. 327

Reading List, P. 339

Use of this Book

Wicca Revealed is laid out in twelve lessons or chapters. Each chapter is intended to provide the basis for one month of study and activity so that the entire course takes twelve months to complete. To this end, the reader will find in each lesson an initial study section followed by a research project and exercises. Readers of this book will find much follow up material and support at www.magickaschool.com.

Chapter One: General Beliefs, Practices and History

General Beliefs, Practices and History

“Pagan Witchcraft is a fully developed, independent religion...it is a modern development which deliberately draws upon ancient images and ideas for contemporary needs.”

Professor Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*.

Welcome to the Class!

By the end of the main part of the lesson you will know about Witches’ general beliefs and practices as well as the history of Wicca and Witchcraft and some of its key personalities and traditions.

Continuing on, there is a research project for you to complete.

There are also two meditative and self-transforming exercises for you to work on.

You will then find a reading list to help broaden your knowledge.

Finally, there is a blessing.

Initial Note

For the sake of clarity, I should point out that in this course the terms “Wicca”, “Witchcraft” and the “Craft” are generally used interchangeably, although it is made clear when a tradition believes that it is not Wiccan and does not describe itself as such [1]. The term “Wiccan” is applied to most coven Witches and most forms of solitary practice.

I also take a fluid approach to the religion of Wicca, believing very strongly that you should only do things that feel right to you. Inevitably, though, there are other opinions and other ways of looking at things; at the end of the day you will have to make up your own mind and it is sincerely hoped that this book will give such inspiration, with regard to this and many other issues...

Witches, Wicca and Witchcraft: General Beliefs and Practices

Today, in the popular mind, a Witch can be a figure of diverse fantasy. Generally portrayed as a female, the images range from the comic book scariness of the Wicked Witch of the West, to the cutesy teenager who casts spells in her bedroom; from the sexy Witch wrapped in black latex, to the evil malignant hag creating misery. Rarely do these popular conceptions reflect present day Witchcraft's customs and traditions, hardly ever do they accurately reflect its female practitioners, and, even more infrequently, do they allow for the male Witch. Given all this, it is perhaps surprising to learn that Witches belong to one of the fastest growing religions in the world today, and that the religion has got a healthy mix of female and male participants.

Wicca is a Pagan religion that generally worships a Goddess and a God and respects the polarity between the feminine and masculine. The religion forwards the view that deity is immanent within nature, and Wiccans celebrate the seasons and Cross Quarter days in order to honour the planet and its forces. They work with natural and spiritual energies in harmony with nature.

Some Witches practice Wicca in a group known as a coven; others are solitary and work alone. All Witches believe in the power of the Moon; those that are coven based attend a monthly gathering when the Moon is full, while solitaries carry out certain practices by themselves. Wicca is not a passively received religion and Witches are not spectators; they actively take part in the rites and rituals and the continuing development of their spirituality. Often, when basic training is complete, Witches choose to specialise in what may be loosely termed a "magical discipline" such as Divination, Herbalism, Astrology, Reiki, Crystal Healing or Talismanic Magic. These skills are then employed for the betterment of others, as there is a strong ethos of love towards one's fellow human within the Craft.

In Wicca there are no absolute fixed rules, apart perhaps from its central principle, the Wiccan Rede, which states: "An' it harm none, do what thou wilt". However, this does not mean that Wiccans do not have a commonality of belief.

In America, between 1973 and 1974, an attempt was made to define this common ground. A brief and diverse association of contemporary Wiccans was formed under the name of the Council of American Witches. After much debate and searching for agreement, they came up with a 13 point definition which was compiled by Carl Llewelyn Weschcke [2]:

1. We practice rites to attune ourselves with the natural rhythm of life forces marked by the phases of the Moon and the seasonal Quarters and Cross Quarters.
2. We recognize that our intelligence gives us a unique responsibility toward our environment. We seek to live in harmony with nature in ecological balance offering fulfillment to life and consciousness within an evolutionary concept.
3. We acknowledge a depth of power far greater than that apparent to the average person. Because it is far greater than ordinary it is sometimes called ‘supernatural’, but we see it as lying within that which is naturally potential to all.
4. We conceive of the Creative Power in the universe as manifesting through polarity – as masculine and feminine – and that this same Creative Power lies in all people, and functions through the interaction of the masculine and the feminine. We value neither above the other, knowing each to be supportive of the other. We value sex as pleasure, as the symbol and embodiment of life, and as one of the sources of energy used in magickal practice and religious worship.
5. We recognize both outer worlds and inner, or psychological worlds sometimes known as the Spiritual World, the Collective Unconsciousness, the Inner Planes etc. – and we see in the interaction of these two dimensions the basis for paranormal phenomena and magickal exercises. We neglect neither dimension for the other, seeing both as necessary for our fulfillment.
6. We do not recognize any authoritarian hierarchy, but do honor those who teach, respect those who share their greater knowledge and wisdom, and acknowledge those who have courageously given of themselves in leadership.

7. We see religion, magick and wisdom in living as being united in the way one views the world and lives within it – a world view and philosophy of life which we identify as Witchcraft – the Wiccan Way.

8. Calling oneself ‘Witch’ does not make a Witch – but neither does heredity itself, nor the collecting of titles, degrees and initiations. A Witch seeks to control the forces within her/himself that make life possible in order to live wisely and without harm to others and in harmony with nature.

9. We believe in the affirmation and fulfillment of life in a continuation of evolution and development of consciousness giving meaning to the Universe we know and our personal role within it.

10. Our only animosity towards Christianity, or towards any other religion or philosophy of life, is to the extent that its institutions have claimed to be ‘the only way’ and have sought to deny freedom to others and to suppress other ways of religious practice and belief.

11. As American Witches, we are not threatened by debates on the history of the Craft, the origins of various terms, the legitimacy of various aspects of different traditions. We are concerned with our present and our future.

12. We do not accept the concept of absolute evil, nor do we worship any entity known as ‘Satan’ or ‘the Devil’ as defined by Christian tradition. We do not seek power through the suffering of others, nor accept that personal benefit can be derived only by denial to another.

13. We believe that we should seek within Nature that which is contributory to our health and well-being.

Within this broad belief system, that most Wiccans would be able to subscribe to, there are a number of traditions; many of these are coven based but can be successfully adapted for solitary use. A quick list of some of the better known ones would include Gardnerians, Alexandrians, Seax-Wiccans, Cochranians and Faery Wiccans. There are also a number of non-tradition based solitary Witches with their own particular styles of practice such as Hedge and Cyber Witches.

Within each tradition the practices of Witchcraft are generally quite fluid and allow for freedom of expression, creativity and invention. There are few set rules and little dogma. Further, beyond the coven structure, Witches are usually autonomous. This freedom from a religious chain of command has, for many, been one of Wicca's greatest attractions. However, the situation is constantly changing. There are now some very large traditions that are Internet based with a definite hierarchy and more structure than is traditional. An argument in support of this would be that for Wicca to grow a formal organisation is necessary and inevitable. Whether or not this is a good thing must be left for you to decide.

The History of Wicca

The history of Wicca used to be terribly controversial, and in the past there have been some heated debates among Wiccans over this topic. The division lay between those who believed that Wicca was an ancient religion dating from pre-history, to those who saw that it was a modern synthesis of a number of Pagan practices and beliefs created in the twentieth century.

The first argument made a case for Witchcraft dating back into the mists of pre-recorded history and asserted that it was widespread across the whole of Europe, surviving into the twentieth century. This argument was based on the now discredited thesis of Margaret Murray, a well regarded expert of Egyptology. Such a definition was terribly appealing as it gave Wicca an extremely ancient provenance and an air of mystery. It also gave a sense of survival against terrible odds in the form of the "Burning Times", and the supposed general hounding at the hands of the Catholic Church. Attractive as it may have been, Murray's thesis was comprehensively dismantled by academics and there are none today who uphold it [3]. Historians now generally conclude that there is plenty of evidence for the practice of magic throughout European history, there is also evidence of many diverse survivals of Pagan practice, but, if an organised Witchcraft existed, then all Murray's evidence would point towards it being of the Satanic and demonic variety that has nothing whatsoever to do with modern

Wicca [4]. That said, within Wiccan literature there are a number of very famous and widely used books on modern Pagan Witchcraft that generally follow Murray's ideas and, even though her historical inaccuracies have been well known for some time, no-one has seen fit to revise their editions accordingly [5]. In general, though, there are fewer Witches than there were who would support this unhistorical analysis. Indeed, many in the Craft see such a view as giving ammunition to its detractors and actively promote the idea that Wicca is a consciously created synthesis, but none the worse or invalid for that.

Let us explore some of the key traditions and figures that have shaped Wicca from the twentieth century to today. It should be stated that this list is not exhaustive, but it will provide those that are interested with a solid basis for further exploration of the history of the Craft.

Different Traditions of Wicca and Witchcraft

An entire book could be written on the traditions of Wicca and Witchcraft available today and here only a handful are listed to give you some idea of the range and scope available.

The Gardnerian Tradition

It is generally accepted that Gerald Brosseau Gardner (1884-1964) is the founding father of Wicca. For a while he was an owner and manager of tea and rubber plantations in the Far East, and, later, an inspector in the Malay customs service. Both occupations seem an unlikely breeding ground for the creation of a counter-cultural religion, until it is taken into account that Gardner had interests in Spiritualism and Freemasonry, as well as a wide knowledge of Buddhism and tribal magic.

He claimed to have been initiated in 1939 into a tradition of Witchcraft that was a survival of European Paganism. His initiation was supposed to have been at the hands of one of the New Forest Witches in England, who was later identified by Gardner as Dorothy Clutterbuck. Many have been sceptical that such a figure existed, but that "old Dorothy" was a real person has been proved both by

Doreen Valiente, who discovered her birth certificate [6], and Professor Ronald Hutton [7]. However, Dorothy was an Anglican Tory and this conservative persuasion seems to give the lie to Gardner's assertion that she was involved in Witchcraft.

Hutton details the extent and variety of influences on Gardner in his excellent and scholarly work, *The Triumph of the Moon* [8]. He acknowledges that it is difficult to assess who provided Gardner with the inspiration and sources for the development of his religion. Key influences seem to have included members of the Rosicrucian Fellowship of Crotona, a woman known under the magical name of Dafo (who may have been one of Gardner's High Priestesses in the 1950s), the writings of Margaret Murray, and some of the ideas and ceremonies deriving from the Golden Dawn. Some commentators state that infamous magician Aleister Crowley was influential in inspiring Gardner to establish his new Pagan religion. The exact extent of Crowley's influence remains debateable (and contentious among Wiccans) but there was perhaps at one time a correspondence between the two men, and Gardner may just possibly have been Crowley's magical student. Certainly, Witchcraft's central tenet of "An it harm none, do what thou wilt", is strongly suggestive of Crowley's earlier "Do what thou wilt" [9], and it is generally well known that Gardner used quotes from Crowley's works in his rites [10].

Gardner went about setting up his own coven and amongst the most important of the members of this organisation was Doreen Valiente, who seems to have collaborated with Gardner to write much of the ceremonial practices of what has become known as Gardnerian Wicca [11]. Importantly for the history of Wicca, Gardner published the fictional works *A Goddess Arrives* and *High Magic's Aid* in the 1930s and 40s [12]. These were followed in the 1950s by the supposedly factual works, *Witchcraft Today* and *The Meaning of Witchcraft* [13]. Although there is much in these works that has since been refuted, they have been partly responsible for the growth of Wicca and, for over a decade in the mid-twentieth century, provided the only real, high profile published source for knowledge of the Craft.

Gardnerian Wicca is generally coven based although there are solitaires who have adapted it to suit. There is an oath of secrecy protecting the knowledge of rituals, rites and practices, although nowadays so much is in the public domain that this has become more or less redundant. Gardnerians have an initiatory system of three degrees commonly referred to as “First”, “Second”, and “Third” degree. Traditionally only another Witch can make a Witch; however, it is possible to self initiate as you will learn in later lessons. Those who have obtained a Third Degree are referred to as either a High Priestess or High Priest and generally Witches of this rank will run a coven. Gardnerians celebrate the Goddess and God, have a programme of seasonal celebrations, organise monthly meetings around the Full Moon and practice a range of spell-craft and magic. As we shall see, Gardnerian Wicca has provided the framework for a variety of individual and groups to create their own distinct traditions.

Alexandrian Wicca

Perhaps the foremost and most widely recognised of these is Alexandrian Wicca. It was created in the 1960s by Alex Sanders with the help of his wife Maxine. Although Alex claimed he was initiated into Witchcraft by his grandmother, it is now generally agreed that this story isn’t true and that it is more likely that somehow he got a copy of a Gardnerian Book of Shadows and adapted it [14]. Contrary to some people’s beliefs, the tradition is named after the ancient library of Alexandria and not Sander’s first name. Maxine Sanders has said that the name was suggested by famous Witch Stewart Farrar [15].

Sander’s system shares many similarities to Gardnerian Wicca. Alexandrian practice is also coven based with a system of three initiatory degrees, has as an emphasis on gender polarity, worships the Goddess and God, celebrates the seasons and has monthly meetings around the time of the Full Moon. It differs from Gardnerian Wicca in the use of some magical tools, as well as a number of deity and elemental names. It also incorporates Kabbalah, Ceremonial, and Enochian Magic into its rites. Many Alexandrians and Gardnerians recognise that initiation into one tradition is a qualification for another, so much so in fact that

syntheses exist such as the Algard Tradition created by Mary Nesnick in the United States.

Seax-Wicca

It wasn't long, though, before other traditions were created that moved further away from the Gardnerian model and the new religion began to spread far and wide. Raymond Buckland and his wife Rosemary came to the USA from England in 1962. Disciples of Gardnerian Wicca, they were among the first to introduce this tradition to the States. A number of Raymond's works have been influential. His *Complete Book of Witchcraft* aims to provide the student with the means to achieve the knowledge base of a Third Degree Witch [16], whilst at the same time not expounding any one particular tradition. The book has been widely used because of its flexibility, which has allowed the possibility of developing one's own particular style of Wicca. In the early 1970s, Buckland also wrote *The Tree, The Complete Book of Saxon Witchcraft* [17]. This has been important for the development of Seax-Wicca. It differs from the Gardnerian/Alexandrian traditions in a number of important ways. For example, there is no degree structure and no oath of secrecy. The High Priestess and Priest are chosen democratically by the coven members and are elected annually to serve for a year and a day only, after which new leaders can be voted for. The tradition also concentrates on Saxon deities, most notably Woden and Freya, where the God rules the winter and the Goddess the summer [18].

Dianic Wicca

In the 1960s and early 1970s Wicca began to reflect the rise of feminism within the USA and Europe, most famously in the form of Dianic Wicca. This tradition falls into at least two distinct paths, the most well-known of which was created by Californian Zsuzsanna Budapest, whose type of Wicca is an all female, feminist tradition that emphasises women's rights. Contrary to popular belief, Dianic covens of this type are not exclusively lesbian and rely on straight females to provide a balance of energies. Another well-known branch, founded in Texas, was brought into the world by Morgan McFarland and Mark Roberts, and is

sometimes referred to as "Old Dianic". Here, both women and men primarily participate in worshipping the Goddess, although the God is present as her beloved consort. Despite the emphasis on the feminine, many of the views, beliefs and practices of Dianic Wicca are similar to other more mainstream traditions.

Hereditary Witchcraft

Not all traditions of Witchcraft recognise that they have their roots in Gardner's system. There are a large number of hereditary Witches who claim lineage completely independently of modern Wicca. These are often strongly family based and their members can staunchly defend the veracity of their historical claims. Others conclude that their traditions are based either on a familial custom of fortune telling, the practice of "cunning", folk magic or forms of shamanism and not Witchcraft. You will have to decide for yourself what claims you are prepared to believe.

Cochranians

One of the better known hereditary traditions is that of male-oriented Cochranian Witchcraft, created by poet Robert Cochrane. Like many founding figures he has made some debateable claims about being part of a hereditary coven asserting that he was initiated into a Warwickshire group in England from the age of five. Some have felt that he further stated that the tradition's roots went back to 1734 CE [19]. However, it appears this view is based on a misunderstanding, as for Cochranians the date is significant in the sense of being a cryptic reference to the Goddess. His ideas appear in Justine Glass's *Witchcraft, The Sixth Sense* [20], although some Cochranians say this work can be misleading. The tradition has a definite emphasis on male mysteries, meditation and vision work.

The Feri Tradition

There are also traditions that have non-familial roots; one of the most notable of these has been the Feri Tradition [21], which, from small beginnings, has become known around the world. In large measure this is due no doubt to the writings of Starhawk, the tradition's most famous member, as well as the work of

the bard and poet Gwydion Pendderwen [22]. The movement was created in the late 1950s by the poet Victor Anderson and wife Cora, who were influenced by Gardner's *Witchcraft Today*. It goes under a variety of titles such as Fae, Fey, Feri, Faerie, Fairy, and Fairie Witchcraft. Victor created the tradition's rituals using fairy folklore and beliefs for inspiration. The Fey Folk venerate the Goddess and Divine Twins (who are seen as her son, brother and lover). These are considered to be real entities on the Spiritual Plane, as opposed to being a higher part of our own minds. The tradition is joyous, creative and strongly sensual, working with a variety of goddesses and gods to realise practical magic and bring about self development.

Solitaires

Of course, all the types of Wicca and Witchcraft so far discussed are coven and group based. However, over the last three decades there has been an ever growing movement of solitary Witches. As the name suggests, these Witches generally practice alone. They are often eclectic in their approach, which means that they take aspects of their practice from a number of sources and combine it into a unique personal synthesis, although others will adapt a particular tradition. Solitaires often see themselves as being highly creative and will write their own rites and rituals, prayers and invocations. Some will go down the route of self-initiation or dedication, whilst others see this as being completely unnecessary. The solitary path is not an easy one and takes a lot of determination and self discipline to be successful.

Hedge Witches

One of the most famous types of Witchcraft often practiced alone is that of the Hedge or Kitchen Witch [23]. Members tend to work from home focussing on practical aspects of the Craft. These include herbalism, magic, cooking, arts and crafts, Earth mysteries and the elements. The Hedge Witch is often something of an eco-warrior and involved with working for the benefit of the planet. Typically, they will have a strict "green" attitude to their religion and life in general. It is worth pointing out that there are many Hedge Witches who do not consider

themselves as “religious” or Wiccan, preferring instead to see themselves as an expression of deity and emphasising spontaneity within their practices as opposed to a defined structure.

Cyber Witches

Wicca and Witchcraft has continued to adapt with the times. The rise of the Internet in the late 1990s has meant an explosion of related information in Cyber-Space. This has taken a variety of forms. Many sites provide a focal point in the form of forums, advice, On-line Wiccan shopping, courses and mentoring. Sites that provide these services are frequented by a variety of coven based Witches as well as solitaires. Further, some Witches meet on the Net to carry out a range of activities such as celebrations and the practice of magic. This can be deeply frowned upon by some within the Craft who reckon on it having no legitimacy or effectiveness; others, of course, take the opposite point of view and see it as being very beneficial.

There are also a number of sites that offer fully fledged traditions. Some can be disparaging of these, whilst others are deeply committed to their organisation. Supporters would say that if you want to be a Witch you have to learn somewhere, and a good interactive course, with an opportunity to discuss issues and get help from an On-line community, can be far better than just learning from a book at home. However, it is true to say that the Internet can be a mine field for those seeking a magical education, and the student will need to be discriminating about their choice of schooling. There are a number of sites that will confer First, Second and Third Degree status in return for payment. Some of these sites are little more than outright scams. Whilst others provide training of a high quality, with extensive detailed courses and mentoring, for a reasonable lifetime fee. Some, whilst providing these quality services, charge monthly. The monthly payments can be less than a membership at a gym, but still run into several hundred pounds. Many will be happy enough to pay this, particularly if the service is good. As always though, it pays to shop around; most reputable web based Witch sites will give you various try before you buy schemes. Some, like www.magickaschool.com,

will even provide you with complete quality courses, that you are under no obligation to pay for, with a later option of taking out a subscription.

A Number of Important Personalities

Margaret Murray (1863-1963)

Murray was made Assistant Professor of Egyptology at the University College of London in 1924, a post she held until her retirement in 1935. In 1926 she became a fellow of Britain's Royal Anthropological Institute and at the age of 90 became President of the Folklore Society. Murray's best known work, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, was published in 1921 [24]. Her thesis expounded the view that an underground Pagan resistance to the Christian Church had existed across Europe and was organised into covens of thirteen worshippers, who were dedicated to a male god. This religion, dating from the Neolithic period, survived unnoticed throughout the Christian era up to its uncovering at the hands of the Witch hunters in the mid-fifteenth century. Despite Murray's assertions that the cult practiced human sacrifice, it was of curiosity to those in the twentieth century with an interest in folklore and Paganism. It allowed for the freedom of women and recognised their importance, whilst being open to sexuality and resisting Church oppression. In this respect Murray's ideas can be seen in the context of the then popular view of a romanticised rural England, standing in contrast to industrialisation and the massively destructive and horrific conflicts of the early part of the century.

Murray's work has been roundly criticised by academic historians and it is agreed in those circles that her ideas were the result of misinterpreting and exaggerating evidence taken from limited sources, as well as the falsification of some documents. A quote from Professor J. B. Russell's *A History of Witchcraft* summarises the academic position: "the Murray thesis on the whole is untenable. The argument for the survival of any coherent fertility cult from antiquity through the Middle Ages into the present is riddled with fallacies" [25].

The God of the Witches [26] , published in 1931, expanded on Murray's claims that the Witch cult had worshiped a Horned God whose origins went back to prehistory. She asserted that the Witches' confessions of worshipping Satan proved they actually did venerate such a god.

Murray's works were to become bestsellers from the 1940s onwards, and, for a number of decades, were generally believed to be true. Until recently her writings were highly regarded in many Wiccan circles. However, especially after Ronald Hutton's *Triumph of the Moon*, which continued the exposé of Murray's ideas [27] and has been well received by many modern Witches, this influence has declined markedly. Nonetheless, Murray's ideas had a profound effect on Gardner and many of currently used Wiccan terms derive from, or are influenced by her work, such as the Wiccan term the "Old Religion", as well as concepts like the coven, the Esbat, the Wiccan Wheel of the Year, and the Horned God.

Doreen Valiente (1922-1999)

Doreen Valiente is widely regarded as the co-creator of Wicca. Shortly after Gardner made known his claims that he had been initiated into a surviving Witch cult, he was joined by Valiente, who collaborated with him in the creation of rituals. Valiente also wrote a number of poems for the use of Wiccans as well as a several books on the subject such as *An ABC of Witchcraft*, *Where Witchcraft Lives*, *Natural Magic* and *Witchcraft for Tomorrow* [28]. *Witchcraft for Tomorrow* has been particularly useful, outlining the main Witch gatherings, both seasonal and monthly, as well as providing a simple Book of Shadows containing rites and rituals. Spurred by the challenge from academic sceptics, such as Professor J. B. Russell [29], Valiente attempted to provide evidence for Gardner's claims concerning his initiation, most notably by finding documents that Dorothy Clutterbuck existed. Valiente is credited as the 'Mother of Modern Witchcraft', and played a critical role in re-writing much of Gardner's original ritual material.

The Farrars

Stewart (1916-2000) and Janet Farrar (b.1950) have together authored a number of influential books on Wicca. Stewart's first foray into Witchcraft began

with a journalistic assignment given to him by *Reveille* to review the film “Legend of the Witches” at a press event [30]. Whilst there, he ran across Alex and Maxine Sanders, who had played a part in the making of the film as advisors. On being interviewed, Alex Sanders decided to invite Farrar to one of his rituals and he then went on to become a member of the Sanders' coven in 1970. Here he was to meet Janet Owen who became his second wife, and together they seem to have quickly accelerated through the Degrees, becoming Third Degree Witches in 1971, and setting up their own coven later that year. Around this time Stewart began work on his first non-fiction book, *What Witches Do* [31]. In 1976 the Farrars moved to Ireland to get away from hectic living in London. Both husband and wife went on to publish a number of books on Wicca. Their seminal books *Eight Sabbats For Witches* and *The Witches' Way* [32] together detailed all the main ceremonies, initiatory rites and practices of Wiccans working within a Gardnerian/Alexandrian framework. The books were later combined in the 1980s as *A Witches' Bible: The Complete Witches Handbook*. This book has been hugely influential; not only does it give access to a complete religious system that is capable of encompassing all life's experiences, but it concentrates, as well, on how a coven organisation can be set up and run. The Farrars returned to England in 1988, but by 1993 were in Ireland again. They were joined by Gavin Bone, with whom they would co-author two more books, *The Pagan Path* and *The Healing Craft* [33].

Starhawk (a.k.a. Miriam Simos b. 1951)

The American writer Starhawk was initially trained in the Feri Tradition. She wrote the important book *The Spiral Dance* [34] in the late 1970s and it has since become the bestselling book on Wicca ever [35]. This work is now something of a standard text and provides many exercises and rituals that have been widely utilised and adapted throughout the Craft. More than this though, *The Spiral Dance* attempts to show a way to break down traditional power structures and gender roles in ways designed to be enhancing for both female and male. There is a strong emphasis on spontaneity within the rituals she writes of, perhaps more so than many of Wicca's main authors. Through a lightly structured approach and the

development of therapy, art and playfulness she attempts to give individuals the means to realise their potential. This approach has been influential in the USA and Europe in the development of a more feministic style of Witchcraft, although the God still very much plays a part.

Conclusion

This concludes our brief look at the history and key personalities of Wicca and Witchcraft. Enough has been said to give the beginner an idea of the development of the religion, as well as the diverse range of its traditions [36]. However, as was stated above, the subject is vast and I have done little more than point out some of the main strands. Those that want to will find a number of excellent sources from which to continue their studies in the reading list at the end of the book.

Research Project

You are taking the first few tentative steps on what may well become a lifetime's spiritual journey. Whether you ultimately decide to work alone, or within a group or coven, your own research will be important.

This book will provide you with a number of research topics over the coming weeks and months.

It is strongly suggested that you write your research up and make an effort to form your own views rather than just passively reading and accepting everything that is written; and that goes for the information you receive via this book as well. What you do with your research is up to you. You may want to keep it for your own personal reflection, or you may wish to post it on the Magicka School Forum (www.magickaschool.com/forum) and start a discussion with other site members.

As an initial project, why not pick one or two of the traditions of Wicca or Witchcraft outlined above that catch your eye? Go on intuition; ask yourself which brand seems right for you. When you have decided, make an effort to find out all you can about it. This knowledge will be important, as at some point you may well want to join a tradition Off-line or adapt its beliefs to a solitary practice. Do not feel that you *have* to choose a tradition to follow (at this stage or at any other). This project is only intended to widen your knowledge of the options available to you.

Find out about:

- The tradition's founders.
- Where and when it started.
- Where it's based.
- Where it currently operates.
- What its specific systems are.
- What goddesses and gods it uses.

- Whether or not it has a degree system.
- Whether it has any tradition publications.

Exercises

Over the course of *Wicca Revealed* you will be introduced to meditations, rituals and spells. This lesson will give you some basic meditation techniques and two to practice by yourself.

Meditations

Meditation will have a profound effect on your life for the better. When harnessed correctly it can have an enormous effect on the course of your life and those around you. Meditational practices have a deeply relaxing effect on the mind and body, promoting a sense of physical well being and emotional harmony. Further, techniques can be used to awaken your spiritual and magical self. Witches use meditative exercises in a variety of ways, such as to explore their minds and surroundings, to effect healing (both for themselves and others), and to aid the effectiveness of magic. Over the coming chapters, you too will be shown how you can do these things.

For those of you have never meditated before, the following section will provide you with a few guidelines before you begin:

1. Try to set aside a ten to twenty minute space every day at the same time or at least the same part of the day. If you are really too busy then the minimum amount of time that will work is ten to twenty minutes twice a week. Don't cut down the amount of time of each session, however, as it is hard to be effective in less than the recommended time. It is suggested for the first week that you practice "The Tree" meditation before "The Pentagram"; this is because it is an important exercise in grounding. Don't be discouraged if your first efforts feel clumsy and forced; practice makes perfect and before long you will have begun to master both.
2. Try to find a space where you won't be disturbed and somewhere that is warm and comfortable. For some of you this may mean negotiating with your family. Remember that you are entitled to some time for yourself.

3. Leave the phone off the hook.
4. Meditating either lying or sitting down is fine. Don't try to meditate lying down late at night, as you may find yourself nodding off.
5. Wear comfortable clothing if possible. At least loosen belts and ties or undo the top button of your jeans.
6. Soft light is best for meditation, so turn the main light off and use a lamp or preferably a candle.
7. Some people find relaxing music helps induce a meditative state, whilst others find it too much of a distraction. Experimentation will help you create the right ambience.
8. Breathing patterns are an easy way of calming and relaxing oneself. Don't be tempted to skip the breathing part of a meditation. Once in the process of visualisation don't stress if you are not following the pattern any more. Just concentrate on the mind's view.
9. It is strongly recommended you keep a journal in which to record your experiences and impressions that you receive. Some Witches have one book that they use for a personal record of meditations, dreams and so on, sometimes referred to as a Book of Mirrors, and another, known as a Book of Shadows, that they record rituals and ceremonies, invocations and prayers in. Some Witches simply merge the two and incorporate both meditation and ritual work in one volume. What format these books will be in very much depends on the individual Witch, and everything from a plain A4 notepad to a beautifully illuminated, leather bound work of art is fine. The important thing is to keep a record.
10. Read through the meditation a couple of times before you begin, so that you know what you will be meditating on.

Magical Prayer

The following beautiful prayer was given to me by an old friend. I have been unable to trace its origin. It can be used before any meditation work is begun:

From beneath me arises the energy of the Earth, my home and my foundation.

From above me pours down the light of the Sun and the enchanting Moon.

To my right hand flows the strength to control and direct, the power of magic.

To my left hand comes the skill to divine and to heal, the source of blessing.

Before me arises the perfected one I strive to become, my magical true self.

Behind me falls the one I was, and with it my discarded failures.

Around me circle the eternal stars, lamps of wisdom in the deeps of space.

Within me grows the flame of life, the light of experience and understanding.

The Tree

The tree meditation provides you with a way of grounding. During meditation, ritual, spell-craft or any other kind of magical work you are raising and working with energy. Grounding is the term used for the various ways that this energy can be harmlessly channelled back into the earth. It is very important, once your work is finished, that the energy raised and worked with is properly dispersed, as, if it is not, it tends to hang around and become stale, creating a feeling of lacklustre and tiredness in the individual. It can also be psychically damaging.

Light a candle in your meditation space and use either sandalwood or frankincense to perfume the air if you wish. Breathe in for seven, hold for four and breathe out for seven. Repeat this pattern for a few minutes. Try to just concentrate on your breath. This is harder than it sounds and you may find any number of images crowding into your mind. Don't worry if this happens; just gently bring your attention back to your breathing.

Imagine that you are sitting in a forest glade with your back against a tree. Dappled light shines down on you through fresh green leaves. You can smell the scent of moss and pine, and feel the gentle rub of bark on your back.

Slowly allow yourself to become absorbed into the tree. Feel your back become as one with the bark and fibre of the trunk until you can sense the tree's energy flowing through your body.

Concentrate now on the light pouring down from the Sun, through the leaves, the twigs, the branches and the trunk of the tree. Feel the Sun's energy flowing through you as well. For a few moments allow the light to create a sense of well being and vitality as it seeps in to your very core.

When you are ready let this energy pass through you, back into the tree, from where you can feel it working its way downwards; down through the main roots, down through the root fibres, down to the dark rich earth.

Slowly and gradually become aware of your breathing. Breathe in for seven, hold for four and breathe out for seven. Repeat this pattern for a few minutes.

Come to normal consciousness, feeling refreshed and calm.

Record your thoughts and impressions in your journal or Book of Shadows.

There are many other ways of grounding, some of which you will learn in this course. For the time being, use this meditation after any work that causes energy to be raised.

Pentagram Visualisation

The central symbol of Wicca is the pentagram, or five pointed star, which is used extensively throughout Wiccan practice.



Even today this symbol can strike a note of fear into many, as in popular culture it is often misrepresented as a sign of Satanism. This is a pity -use of the pentagram in Wicca derives from its use in the Golden Dawn Magical System which has nothing to do with Devil worship.

There are a number of ways the Wiccan pentagram can be constructed and deconstructed.

Invoking the Pentagram

For the time being, in your meditation visualisations, you should create a pentagram following the direction given by the arrows.



When finished with, the pentagram should be deconstructed. This is known as:

Banishing the Pentagram

The above pentagram can be banished like this:



The Pentagram as a Symbol

There are a large number of possible symbolic interpretations of the pentagram. Perhaps most commonly it is seen to embody the Four Elements and Spirit in the manner shown:



You will notice that you will be invoking the pentagram in the direction of Earth and banishing in the direction of Spirit. Spirit is placed at the top of the pentagram, above the Elemental energies. Before you begin you might want to try drawing invoking and banishing pentagrams on a piece of paper, so that you don't have to concentrate unduly on how to construct and deconstruct this symbol during the meditation.

Light a candle in your meditation space and use either sandalwood or frankincense to perfume the air if you wish. Breathe in for seven, hold for four and breathe out for seven. Repeat this pattern for a few minutes. Try to just concentrate on your breath. If images crowd into your mind, just gently bring your attention back to your breathing.

In your mind's eye imagine a black backdrop. It is a black as you have never experienced before, it is the void of the Universe, empty of all things. There is no light whatsoever and you are unable to see. Allow yourself to experience this blackness for a few moments. Gradually a small silver droplet, similar in colour to the Moon, appears at the top of your vision. Slowly and steadily the silver drop extends, at first downwards to the left, then up to the right, across to the left, down to the right and up to the top. In front of you is a silver pentagram set against a background of the deepest black.

Hold the image in your mind's eye for a moment or two and contemplate the meaning it has for you.

Now, starting at the bottom left, you will begin to banish the pentagram. See the light gradually disappear from the bottom left to the top, from the top to the

bottom right, from the bottom right to the left, across to the right and down to the left.

Finally, you are left with a barely visible silver dot. Watch this slowly fade from view.

Slowly and gradually become aware of your breathing. Breathe in for seven, hold for four and breathe out for seven. Repeat this pattern for a few minutes.

Come to normal consciousness and record your feelings and impressions.

Some Further Thoughts on Meditation

Many people find meditation to be very difficult for some period of time; even the most able Witches and magicians have struggled at first. Here are some pointers:

1. Start small. At first the mind will wander, most people can't go for even five seconds at first, but, once you can do 5 seconds, you will be able to do 10, and so on.
2. Don't strain.
3. Be gentle on yourself, think of your mind as a wayward child. It will learn the most amazing things but you must be patient and treat it with love.
4. During the first stages give it a couple of tries during a session. One hour is too much. You wouldn't push a child to do something for that long, so don't push your brain. It will only rebel....three to five minutes meditative work at first is plenty.
5. You have learnt to talk, read and write -all extremely complex, difficult tasks. These took years to learn. Meditation is the same; it takes a lot of time and the careful building of skills. But if you stick with it you will be amazed by what you can do.

End Blessing

I hope that you have enjoyed your first lesson in the *Wicca Revealed* course and found the material enlightening and beneficial. Remember that you have now begun your exploration of a beautiful spiritual path that will enrich your life, as well as the lives of those around you. I wish you light and happiness as you explore the religion of Wicca, and may you be guided to well-being, success and joy.

Blessed Be,

In Love and Light,

See you next lesson!

Notes

[1] It is not easy to give definitions of the terms Wicca and Witchcraft that please everyone and this fact should be borne in mind throughout the course. For example, some see that the term “Wiccan” should be applied only to those who operate in covens, whilst many others feel solitaries can be considered Wiccan as well. Some feel the label “Wicca” applies to those who can trace the roots of their beliefs to Gerald Gardner and that Witchcraft refers to non-Gardnerian systems with quite different practices. Both groups can use the term “Witch”.

Others use Wicca and Witchcraft quite interchangeably. It can be very confusing, particularly when you meet individuals who will tell you in no uncertain terms that their view is the correct one. However, the truth is that there are few hard and fast rules when it comes to this subject, and perhaps the safest option is to acknowledge that there is a debate over the use of terms.

[2] As well as being widely available on the Internet this summary is also published in Raymond Buckland, *Buckland's Complete Book of Witchcraft*, Llewellyn, 2003 pp.12-13.

[3] Notable critics include JB Russell in *A History of Witchcraft, Sorcerers, Heretics and Pagans*, Thames and Hudson, 1991, pp. 41-42 and Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, Sussex University Press, 1975, pp. 102-35.

[4] See J.B. Russell, *Ibid*, p. 41.

[5] There are many that could be mentioned, see, for example, the 1989, 10th anniversary edition of Starhawk's, *The Spiral Dance, A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*, Harper, pp. 17-22.

[6] Valiente documents her findings in Janet and Stewart Farrar, *A Witches' Bible, The Complete Witches' Handbook*, Phoenix Publishing Inc. 1996, Appendix A, pp.283-93.

[7] See Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon, A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 205-12.

- [8] On the nature and extent of the influences on Gardner see Hutton, *ibid.*, pp. 205-240.
- [9] This phrase was in print at least as early as the 1938 London edition of *The Book of the Law* published by the O.T.O. (Aleister Crowley's magical order the *Ordo Templi Orientis*). For those that don't know, Aleister Crowley was a key figure in the development of magic in the first half of the twentieth century. He is widely seen as controversial and often unfairly and inaccurately represented as a black magician in the popular press.
- [10] See, for example, parts of "The Charge" and "The Drawing Down of the Moon" from the Wiccan Opening Ritual in Janet and Stewart Farrar, *op. cit.* p.41 and p. 42.
- [11] For example Valiente wrote a rhymed version of the "Charge" as well as the "Witches' Rune" (with Gardner), *ibid.*, p.42.
- [12] Published today as Gerald B. Gardner, *A Goddess Arrives*, Godolphin House, 1997 and High Magic's Aid, Pentacle Enterprises, 1999.
- [13] Available today as Gerald B. Gardner, *Witchcraft Today*, Magickal Childe, 1980 and *The Meaning of Witchcraft*, Red Wheel/Weiser, 2004.
- [14] Stewart Farrar, *What Witches Do*, Robert Hale, 1992. See the Preface to the Third Edition
- [15] See Maxine Sanders's interview with the *Wiccan Pagan Times* at <http://www.twpt.com/sanders.htm>.
- [16] Certainly this is Buckland's view *op. cit.* p. xviii.
- [17] Raymond Buckland, *The Tree, The Complete Book of Saxon Witchcraft*, Red Wheel/Weiser, 1984.
- [18] This has come under criticism from some Witches who feel that the Goddess and God should be seen as ruling the whole year together.
- [19] See Vivianne Crowley, *Wicca*, Element, 2003, p.36. See also, <http://www.cog.org/wicca/trads/1734.html> for an inside viewpoint

- [20] Justine Glass, *Witchcraft, The Sixth Sense*, Wiltshire Book Company. 1974. See in particular chapters 1, 10 and 11.
- [21] Many in the Feri Tradition feel that although something is owed to Gardner and Sanders in terms of some of their belief systems and rituals, their practice has evolved considerably from what can be described as Wicca. The Feri Tradition should not be confused with Faery Wicca founded by author Kisma Stepanich.
- [22] Before his death, Gwydion Pendderwen (1946-1982) recorded two albums called “Songs For the Old Religion” and “The Fairy Shaman” as well as writing a book of poems, *Wheel of the Year*. He was active in sponsoring and promoting Paganism in the USA.
- [23] Hedge Witchcraft owes its standardisation to Rae Beth and her book *Hedge Witch: A Guide to Solitary Witchcraft*, Hale, 1990.
- [24] This is available today as *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, Oxford University Press, 1963.
- [25] J.B. Russell, op. cit. p. 41. Further, on page 42, Russell writes “The Murrayites ask us to swallow a most peculiar sandwich: a large slice of the wrong evidence between two thick slices of no evidence at all”.
- [26] Also available today as *The God of the Witches*, Nuvision Publications, 2005.
- [27] Ronald Hutton, op. cit. pp.194-201.
- [28] These works are available today as Doreen Valiente, *An ABC of Witchcraft*, Robert Hale, 1994, *Where Witchcraft Lives*, Aquarian, 1963 *Natural Magic*, Robert Hale, 1999 and *Witchcraft for Tomorrow*, Hale, 1993.
- [29] See J.B. Russell, op. cit. p. 153.
- [30] “Legend of the Witches” directed by Malcolm Leigh is available as a DVD.
- [31] *What Witches Do*, Phoenix Publishing Inc. 1989.

[32] Janet and Stewart Farrar, *Eight Sabbats For Witches*, Phoenix Publishing Inc. 1988 and *The Witches' Way, Principles, Rituals and Beliefs of Modern Witchcraft*, Robert Hale, 1984.

[33] Janet and Stewart Farrar with Gavin Bone, *The Pagan Path*, Hale, 1995 and *The Healing Craft, Healing Practices for Witches and Pagans*, Brumby Books, 1999.

[34] Available today as *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*, Harper, 1999.

[35] Whether *The Spiral Dance* is a Wiccan book can be contended. Starhawk herself acknowledges a debt to what she terms the "Faery tradition of Wicca as taught by Victor Anderson"

(<http://www.reclaiming.org/about/directions/definition.html>) However, as noted elsewhere in this lesson, many from Anderson's Faery or Feri Tradition do not regard themselves as Wiccan. The situation is complicated when it is also acknowledged that she is a founding member of the Reclaiming Tradition and, although this style of Witchcraft acknowledges a debt to Wicca, it is often seen to be more than this. Those that wish to learn more should go to <http://www.reclaiming.org/> and read the articles there, a number of which are by Starhawk.

[36] Some of the accounts of traditions were partly based on two sources which are recommended further reading for those that wish to find out more: *The Encyclopaedia of Wicca and Witchcraft* by Raven Grimassi, Llewellyn, 2000 and *The Encyclopaedia of Witches and Witchcraft* by Rosemary Ellen Guiley, Checkmark Books, 1999. See also Raymond Buckland, op. cit., pp.309-314.

Chapter Two: The Goddess and God of the Witches

The Goddess and God of the Witches

*“Queen of heaven, Queen of hell,
Horned Hunter of the night-
Lend your power unto the spell
And work our will by magic rite.”*

From *The Witches' Rune* by Doreen Valiente

Merry Meet and Welcome to the Class!

You have done well to begin the second lesson of *Wicca Revealed*. It is not easy to commit yourself to an entire course and you should feel proud that you have reached this next stage. Your dedication to your studies will mean that you are one step further to becoming a true Witch.

In the main part of this lesson you will learn about:

Witches' attitudes towards deity.

How deity relates to the Wiccan concept of the Great Wheel of the Year.

The Goddess and God of Wicca.

A Wiccan creation myth.

Some goddesses and gods from various pantheons.

Continuing on, there is a research project for you to complete.

There is also a meditation and a first spell for you to work on.

Finally, there is a blessing.

Wiccan Attitudes towards Deity

In Wiccan belief the divine is ultimately seen as one. However, in general, Witches believe in the creative polarity of feminine and masculine principles in nature. They commonly think of deity as having a female and male aspect that exist together in a harmonious balance. These beliefs are evident in everything a

Witch does. They inform the practice of magical arts and are to be seen in the way Witches set up their altar, carry out their rites and rituals, and celebrate the stages of the year.

Wicca's view of the balanced nature of deity stands in contrast to other religions that either play down or dispense with the female aspect entirely. This is exemplified by many forms of Christianity, where little part is played by the female in its belief systems or its institutions, as well as other faiths such as Judaism. For Witches, the dynamic creative tension of female and male is part of what may be termed the general theory of polarity, where all things rely on opposites for their existence. The concepts of day and night, dark and light, content and form, positive and negative, attraction and repulsion, North and South, up and down, each need the other for the opposite to exist.

This Wiccan attitude can be expressed by referring to the Chinese concept of Yin and Yang. Yin is the female, negative, dark aspect of creation where Yang is the male, positive, light aspect. Together they make up a whole. It should be noted here that the terms "negative" and "dark" are not used in a derogatory sense. "Negative" should be seen in the same way as science refers to an electron having a negative charge and dark as merely the opposite of light; they are not value judgements. It will also be noticed that in the Yin-Yang symbol the black half contains a white dot and the white half a black dot, showing that in the female there is a part of maleness, and in the male there is a part of femaleness. This interplay of energies at all levels, whether it be divine or earthly, ensures the cyclic flow of creation. Witches believe that over emphasis on one, at the expense of the other, will merely ensure sterility and stagnation. That said, the emphasis given to both Goddess and God varies in different traditions and their covens.



For Wiccans deity is immanent, meaning that it is to be found in all things and pervades existence. Quite literally, the Universe is perceived to be alive and the individual is but one cell in its enormous body. Everything is therefore sacred, and this gives Witches an enormous respect for all expressions of life. On the other hand, many Witches regard the ultimate nature of deity as unknowable, beyond all names and forms and, perhaps, beyond all mortal comprehension. In this respect, it is transcendent.

Generally, Witches believe that goddesses and gods are representative of certain kinds of energy within existence. It is the energies themselves that are perceived as being real. That they are clothed in the form of a goddess or god is a way of making them intelligible to the human mind. Why not, then, use the language of science to express these forces? There are several reasons why Witches don't do this. On one level they feel that science only provides a partial answer to the question of existence, believing that there is much within the Universe that it knows nothing of. Further, the language of science, in its attempts to express these forces, is incapable of speaking to the human soul (something that many scientists doubt exists anyway). Our spirits thrive on the use of poetic and symbolic imagery, that affect us in a more profound way than science ever can. You don't go to a manual on sex to learn about love – rather, you might read Shakespeare. Similarly, for questions of our purpose and meaning in life, you can't consult a book on biology and get an answer that satisfies the soul, however much it might please the intellect. The fact is that many humans are genuinely deeply

moved and motivated by the various images of a goddess and a god, and feel that they have come to a more profound understanding of existence because of them. Further, using such imagery makes the forces knowable to an extent and allows the individual to work with them in their life on the material plane.

Although not endorsed by every Witch, the gods and goddesses can, therefore, be seen to have an existence similar to the Jungian idea of the Archetype. For Jung the Archetypes were powerful symbols that had a genuine life. They existed in the human collective unconscious, independent of the individual mind, and could include god and goddess types [1]. Jung believed that these Archetypes could be worked with to have an effect in the everyday waking world. It would seem that the idea of deity is as old as the human mind itself and buried deep within all our psyches.

The Great Wheel of the Year

Wiccans see nature as a cycle embodying the polarity of deity, and this is no more clearly expressed than in their ideas of the interweaving of female and male forces in the Wheel of the Year. For Wiccans, the Goddess is personified by the Earth and the Moon. She is the eternal Great Mother who creates all life from the Elemental Forces of which she is composed. Green and fresh in the spring, magnificent and powerful in the summer, she has her repose in the latter half of the year where she dresses in more sombre shades of brown and grey. As the Goddess Luna she is the silver, shape shifting Queen of the Heavens governing the tidal forces, as well as the monthly and nightly cycles of life on our planet. The God is embodied in the Sun who travels over the sky in his great chariot of flame. At full power in midsummer, he provides the Goddess Earth with the energy to grow strong. From this point he gradually loses ground until he finally dies after the autumn equinox. Born again in midwinter, he grows and climbs through the early months of the year, to eventually rise triumphant and fertilise the Goddess around the spring equinox. He governs the annular cycles of life and the rhythms of our days.

Some Witches have added to these basics, where they have introduced an Oak and a Holly King [2] that help to express the interplay between solar energy and Mother Earth. The Oak King rules the waxing part of the year from midwinter to midsummer, whilst the Holly King rules the waning part of the year from midsummer to midwinter. The two compete for the attentions of the Goddess as the seasons ebb and flow, and have been incorporated into rituals marking the various stations of the year. The seasonal cycles and the parts played by the Goddess and God are celebrated in the Greater and Lesser Sabbats (these will be discussed fully in later lessons). However, as we shall see, the Goddess and the God are not only thought of as the embodiment of the Earth, Moon and the Sun.

The Deities of the Witches

Each coven or solitary Witch will have their own particular goddess or god that they use on a day-in, day-out basis. Some, for example, opt for Aradia and Cernunnos, others for Bride and Herne. A goddess can be chosen from one pantheon, a god from another, and consistency in this respect is less important than the divine forces that they are seen to represent. Both the divine feminine and the divine masculine will now be considered as they are perceived in modern Witchcraft.

The Divine Feminine

For ancient humankind, reproduction was the central mystery of existence. Woman was the giver of life and the gateway of birth. She was able to bleed profusely every month, changing like the Moon changed, and yet somehow could incredibly self heal, survive and return to the same state completely unscathed. From her body sprang life giving milk that every woman and every man was raised on. She was a walking miracle, mysterious and inexplicable. No wonder, then, that goddesses of fertility have been venerated and revered throughout human existence and frequently allied with the Moon. The Goddess was often depicted as

a triple deity, with the aspects of Maid, Mother and Crone, which not only represented the different stages of female existence but also echoed the waxing, full and waning aspects of the Moon. Today, modern Wiccans feel that all three of these characteristics need to be portrayed if a representation of psychological wholeness is to be maintained.

The Maid

As the Maid the Goddess is young, fresh, magical and enchanting. She is bursting with the promise of new life and is especially associated with the spring. She caresses and explores the new landscape, and, with her natural curiosity, enquires into the new experiences of the world. Coupled with this inquisitive and carefree nature is a vital streak of eroticism that is fascinating and enticing to the opposite sex. When respected and cherished she is full of joy and elation. Make no mistake though, this young woman is not to be crossed and can be dangerous when treated poorly. She is portrayed by goddess figures who are maidens themselves, such as the Greek Persephone, daughter of the corn goddess Demeter, without whom spring cannot exist, or Aradia, daughter of Diana, who came to Earth to teach the art of her mother's Witchcraft.

The Mother

Upon reaching motherhood the Goddess becomes the creator of life. Within her and without her she is responsible for giving it form and ensuring its growth. In the placenta the mother's blood transfers nourishment to the unborn babe, her milk nourishes it during the early stages of childhood, and her arms form a soft loop of protection that none may breach. With far reaching vision she is able to see all life before her and moulds it to her will and her desires. She is both emotionally and physically tough, with an utterly ruthless, destructive side that can stir with seeming unpredictably, when any threaten or harm the things she loves. Powerful and authoritative, she is a giver of sound advice and counsel, and is the very heart of the family and her community. She is the mother and lover of the male, providing a balance for his masculine energy, and able to see deeply within his soul. It is she who shows him the initial ways of the world and sets him

on the path of Manhood, it is she who arouses the ecstasy of the adult God and uses his seed to create new life. The Great Mother is the embodiment of fertility, but fertility on all levels, with an overall plan that is both harmonious and balanced. In this sense she is the goddess Karma who keeps equilibrium regardless of our human notions of morality or fairness. Commonly, in Wicca, she can be seen as the Welsh goddess of reincarnation, Arianrhod, or the Canaanite fertility goddess Astarte. Other times she is worshipped as the powerful Roman goddess Juno, or the huntress Diana, but perhaps most especially she is depicted as the goddess Isis, the greatest of all female deities.

The Crone

Finally, she is the Crone. By those that are cruel, this stage of femininity can be depicted as the suspicious, dried out, ugly old hag of no worth. Even for many women she is a figure of fear and loathing, as everything is done by way of cosmetics and surgery to avoid the perceived descent into a hideous old age. Yet such a way of thinking ignores the true value of this phase in life. For Wiccans she is the Crone or wise-one, richly clothed and decorated by life's experiences. She is a wonderful repository of valuable knowledge and experience, as she has lived through all the ages of femininity. A baby sitter for the Mother, a watchful eye on the Maid, a counsellor to the male; she still has valuable roles to play. And yet she is a terrible reminder of decay and death, the inevitable end of life on this world. Once vibrant and sexy, once matriarchal and powerful, she shows that all things must return to the Earth from whence they came. In our modern 21st century such things are hard to contemplate, too awful almost to be true. But she can show us the way, by being our guide in how to meet our fate with dignity, and our leader through the veil of death. In this respect she is often depicted as Hecate, dread goddess of the Moon, the Underworld and magic.

Another, less popular, way of representing the divine feminine within the Craft, is to show the triple aspect through one particular female deity. Such a goddess is the Greek Hera, who, at Stymphalus, had three temples dedicated to her as the child, the wife and the widow goddess. Another would be the Hindu

Bhavani, referred to as the *Triple Universe*. She is shown as a young, crowned woman, who has the forces of creation latent within her. She is a mother, with the Sun and the Moon at her breasts, as well as the dark and terrible figure of death and transition, with a necklace of skulls.

Because Wicca's concept of the Goddess has these three distinct phases, it is able to provide women with a deity that reflects back their own personal experiences of life and gives them something that they can clearly relate to. Moreover, the various goddesses provide womankind with purposes and roles that are not dictated by modern societal groups. They show what it means to be female in various stages throughout life, regardless of social conditioning. And, further, allow women to reject oppressive values and beliefs, giving them the freedom to realise their true selves at all levels and phases of life. For the male, the Goddess provides a way to explore femininity. On one level, this works by allowing him to recognise the female aspect of his psyche. This can be a liberating and a mind expanding experience, as he comes to appreciate that he is, in fact, so much more than typical gender stereotyping allows. On another level, the Goddess lets him explore femininity outside of himself, providing a true model of the female, that diminishes the impact of society's image, and helps him to appreciate and interact with women as they really are, rather than in how he has been led to believe they should be.

The Divine Masculine

The idea of a God perhaps owes its existence to the hunt. Generally, in most ancient prehistoric societies, before the discovery of agriculture, it is believed that it was the males that hunted. Dressed in animal skins, and taking on something of the character of their quarry by way of disguise, the hunters would have set out in search of their prey. It was the responsibility of the men to provide life in another sense -the very sustenance upon which the well-being of everyone in their group depended. The hunter's often horned attire likely became a symbol of power. Hunting skills would have been passed down from generation to generation, but it

is likely that in many societies they remained an initiatory secret only given to male children of a certain age. The secrets of the hunt, like the inscrutability of child birth, were thus shrouded in mystery. Small wonder, too, that what the male provided was similarly worshiped and honoured. Wiccans generally think of the God as being part animal, part human and part divine. Therefore, He encompasses the three natures of human existence.

The God of the Witches is often portrayed as cloven hoofed, with the body of a man and horns sprouting from his head. This composite image has had a difficult ride through the Christian era where he has become for Christians the figure of the Devil or Lucifer, the fallen angel of light. But the associations of this image with evil and darkness are dreadfully misleading. The God is, in fact, intended to show the incarnation of Spirit on the Physical Plane; He therefore represents the descent of Divine Light into the animal kingdom of our human bodies. For Wiccans he is the Lord of Nature. Upright and true, proud and virile like the stag, he fears no-one and serves to protect his kind, laying down his own life if necessary. He is a leader, but must bow to the seasonal cycles of the Goddess. As her consort he reveres and honours her, making sure that her needs are taken care of. Quick and sure footed he traverses the lands, running free through the forests, over the plains and upon the hills – he knows no bounds or limitations.

The God is also seen as having a strongly sacrificial nature. This is based on the cycle of the Sun. He begins the road to death directly after his midsummer reign (June 21st) where, having had his longest days and filled the land with light, his power gradually weakens and wanes. His darkest time follows his sacrifice at the autumn equinox (September 22nd), where he crosses the line of the equator and the nights become longer than the days. Aleister Crowley referred to this as his crucifixion [3], for he is sacrificed and descends into the gloomy depths of winter, in order that Mother Earth may take her repose before her renewal. However, death is but a stage in nature's cycle and the God is triumphantly reborn at the midwinter solstice (December 21st), from which point the days slowly

become longer. Finally, he comes again to full strength at the spring equinox (March 21st); the hours of day are longer than the hours of night, and the Goddess re-clothes herself in green. He is often portrayed by sacrificial or dying and resurrected gods, such as Tammuz, Osiris, Dionysus, Jesus and Balder.

But the God is not merely a deity of an annular cycle, for he is also able to encompass the stages of a masculine life. He is the new born child, delicate and weak, dependent on others for comfort, yet brimming with the promise of greater things. As he grows to maturity he is the fecund and randy youth, full of hormones, vitality and experiment in the passionate and wild revelry of youth. Akin to Pan, he careers through the landscape and this sometimes means that he is given to an excess of physical pleasure, including food, drink, music and sex. Like the trickster Loki, he is fond of playing tricks on others and especially enjoys baiting his elders. It is at this delicate stage of development that he needs the firm guiding hand, love and understanding of the mother Goddess and the fatherly God.

However, as he matures he takes on the responsibilities symbolised by the stag and strives to become a worthwhile member of the community. The young male learns to have respect for womankind, and begins to take on his role as contributor to the well-being of his family, by providing the things necessary for its nourishment and survival, including protecting it from harm. He becomes a leader and a fighter for what is right, just and true. He grows to be a worthy partner to the Goddess, and can be seen as the kingly Irish god Lugh or the Norse god Odin. In a sense, he sacrifices the waywardness of his youth to the betterment of himself and to others. Finally, at the end of his life, he is old and without the physical strength of his youth. Yet, like the Crone, this does not mean that he no longer has a role. Far from it, in fact, as the new generation looks to his experience and wise counsel.

For the male Witch he provides a model of masculinity that can readily be related to. The God of the Witches is not a “pure” God, representing a rarefied form of maleness, beyond all belief that is inevitably impossible to live up to. He

takes into account what it means to be truly male, and points the way as to how a man can play a constructive and useful role within the family and society at large. He is not a being that constantly has his head in the stars and his mind on the divine. He is a blend of the physical and the spiritual, resonating with what it means to be masculine. That such a role model is desperately needed, is reflected in the fact that in the most technologically advanced civilizations, young males are the group most at risk of committing suicide. Our society has been failing to provide a positive lead to men for some time now, and it is no wonder that they often feel a sense of disempowerment and de-motivation, spiralling into despair. For many, the Wiccan God has served to provide a solution.

For the female Witch, the God provides a model of masculinity that she can be comfortable with; he is not a dominant patriarch but an equal complimentary partner with whom she can grow and develop. This stands in marked contrast to nearly every other religion existing today, that seeks to subordinate and mould her to a masculine ideal.

The Goddess and God and a Wiccan Creation Myth

One of the key sources for modern Witchcraft is nineteenth century American folklorist, Charles G. Leland's, *Aradia, Gospel of the Witches* [4]. This work was used by Gerald Gardner as a foundation for his development of the Wiccan religion and led Doreen Valiente to declare that it was "probably the first major influence (on the lineage of modern Witchcraft) in relatively modern times" [5]. She was to take Leland's translation and use it as a source of inspiration for writing *The Charge of the Goddess*, which is one of the more important ritual constituents in traditional Wicca, based on a Gardnerian model. However, the work is not without controversy. Leland asserted that he had found a surviving Witch cult in the Tuscan mountains of Italy, near Siena, that he proposed had survived there from ancient times. He based his work on a manuscript known as the *Vangelo delle Streghe* (*Gospel of the Witches*) that he said had been given to him by a woman called Maddalena - whether this individual existed or not is a moot point. The *Vangelo* is

widely considered to be fraudulent by modern historians, although whether Maddalena or Leland was the culprit continues to be debated [6]. However, all scholars agree that Leland's claims of an ancient lineage of Witchcraft have no basis in fact [7]. Wiccan attitudes about the work are varied. Some believe it to be true whilst others see that, while it may well be a forgery, this doesn't necessarily undermine its value as a creation myth or as a source for Wiccan rituals.

Although written in a naïve style, the *Vangelo* contains an allegorical creation story called *How Diana Made the Stars and the Rain* [8]. This can be interpreted in a variety of ways by different Wiccan traditions, and the student will likely want to explore this document and come to their own conclusions. For the moment though, I offer my own interpretation.

The *Vangelo* says:

“Diana was the first created before all creation. In her were all things”.

This can be understood that in the beginning there was nothing and that from this state of non-being arose the One. This has resonance with Kabbalistic thought on nothingness and the appearance of a “concentration” or spark of energy, as well as the scientific theory of the Big Bang where a creative flash appeared from nowhere. Scientists believe this flash quickly developed into simple molecular structures such as Hydrogen; there were no stars and darkness reigned. Diana, or the Goddess, can be identified with this initial state, within which there is the potential for all things.

The *Vangelo* continues:

“Out of herself....She divided herself. Into darkness and light she was divided. Lucifer, her brother and son, herself and her other half, was the light.”

Scientists theorise that over aeons, gravity caused the simple atoms and molecules to clump together, and eventually form stars. For the first time, the Universe had light and darkness -and that light was borne from the dark. Furthermore, stars are now seen as the generator of all the other molecules in existence, for, when they explode, star-dust is created, out of which planets, and

all living things, are formed. This passage is also reminiscent of the ideas of Yin and Yang, the cosmic feminine and masculine principles, whose polemic tension lies behind all creation. The state of the One became dynamic existence when divided into two forces. Diana was the darkness and Lucifer [9] (the God) was the light. This again tallies with the theories of the Kabbalists who posit that the One reflected upon itself to become the Two, and that this was the basis for creation.

The *Vangelo* goes on:

“And when Diana saw that the light was so beautiful, the light which was her other half, her brother Lucifer, she yearned for it with exceeding great desire. Wishing to receive the light again into her darkness, to swallow it up in rapture, in delight, she trembled with desire. This desire was the Dawn. But Lucifer, the light, fled from her and would not yield to her wishes; he was the light which flies into the most distant parts of heaven, the mouse which flies before the cat.”

This section perhaps shows that the Goddess, who represents the dark feminine Yin force of creation, wanted to experience the light masculine Yang force that the God represents. But she could not, for although the two forces were working closely together, Yin and Yang were not one. As a result of this, Diana consulted with the “fathers of the Beginning... [as well as] the mothers, the spirits who were before the first spirit, and lamented that she could not prevail with Lucifer”.

She was advised that “to rise she must fall. To become the chief of goddesses, she must first become a mortal.” If the Goddess wanted to be joined with the masculine forces of creation she had to enter into manifestation, for only here, on the Physical Plane, could the two forces be bound together and only here could the Goddess and God unite.

And so Diana took the form of a cat and manifested on the Material Plane to become as one with the God. At first Lucifer was angry, so to maintain this union of creative forces and his love “she hummed the song, it was as the buzzing of bees (or a top spinning round), a spinning wheel spinning life. She spun the lives

of all men: all things were spun from the wheel of Diana. Lucifer turned the wheel.”

Put another way, the God and Goddess worked together to maintain existence; she provided vibratory energy (the song), whilst he provided spinning motion by turning the wheel. They gave the Universe form and movement; the vibratory energy created the structures and was complimented by a spinning force, which maintained them and gave them movement. Therefore, the Goddess and the God together, can be seen to be the essential nature of existence.

A Variety of Goddesses and Gods

As has been seen, Witches are polytheists who use a variety of goddesses and gods from different religions, depending on what aspect of the divine male and female they wish to work with. In this section of the lesson you will find the qualities of some of the better known ones. It should be stated, though, that this list is intended solely as a beginning for further exploration.

Goddesses

Aradia

Aradia is perhaps the most popular name for the Goddess in Wicca. According to the *Vangelo delle Streghe* she was the daughter of Diana and Lucifer and became the messenger of her Great Mother. Diana told her that “I have come to sweep away the bad, the men of evil all will I destroy” [10] and proceeded to educate her in Witchcraft. She told Aradia to battle against social injustices by teaching fellow Witches how to poison great lords in their palaces as well as how to conjure tempests to ruin crops of rich peasants. Diana gives Aradia her anti-establishment stance, typified by her attitude towards the church, which she regards as being an embodiment of all that is evil. Her education complete, Aradia is exhorted to go out and found the secret society of Witches. Her vengeful qualities have been tempered somewhat by her transmission through Gardnerian Wicca, and Aradia is

now most commonly regarded as a nature goddess and seen as a complement to Cernunnos, Herne or Pan.

Arianrhod

The attractive Welsh name of *Arianrhod* means “Silver Wheel”. Only one story of her has survived - the Romance of Math in the *Mabinogion*. This portrays her as abandoning her sons, Dylan and Lleu Llaw Gyffes, as well as holding power over the latter by preventing him from bearing arms. However, her name hints at a nature greater than at first seems evident, for the circumpolar stars that never set and are known as *Caer Arianrhod* (Royal Residence of the Silver Wheel). These stars don’t obey the seeming ever changing laws of the heavens; the Moon has her phases, the Sun his cycles, but these turning stars never set. Because of this some Wiccans use them to symbolise the resting place of souls between incarnations. By this association, *Arianrhod* has become a goddess of reincarnation. Further, because she has sons, she was likely intended to be a goddess of birth, and, the fact she could withhold weapons from her children, perhaps symbolises the power over initiation into manhood.

Hecate

Hecate is perhaps most famous for being a protectress of Witches, and is most typically portrayed as a goddess of the Underworld and strongly associated with magic, especially that of the darker variety. Originally she was regarded as the daughter of the Titans, Perses and Asteria, although a later tradition says she was born of Zeus and Hera. Traditionally she was the guardian of mariners and herds of sheep. Her three faced image, known as a Triple Hecate, was often placed at crossroads in ancient times, where offerings were left to her on the eve of the Full Moon. Her symbols include the key and the flaming torch, as her wisdom is supposed to unlock and illumine all mysteries. Her totem animal is a black dog. As the dark goddess, she is particularly associated with the Crone.

Demeter and Persephone

The Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone (also known as Kore) is famous throughout the world. Demeter was a great corn goddess who doted on her

beautiful daughter, Persephone, and together they tended the Earth causing vegetation to grow. Unknown to either of them, Hades, god of the Underworld, had become consumed with desire for Persephone, and one day kidnapped her and dragged her down to his realm. Not knowing what had happened to her daughter, Demeter was desolate and despairing. She went and consulted Hecate, the great Crone, who advised that she contact Helios, the Sun god, who could see all things. Helios blamed Zeus (the King of the Gods) saying that he had granted Persephone to Hades. In an attempt to force Zeus to command the release of her daughter, Demeter refused to let crops grow and the land became barren. Zeus finally gave in and commanded Hades to release Persephone. However, before she left, Hades persuaded her to eat some pomegranate seeds, a symbol of a marriage that could not be revoked. To save the situation, Zeus proposed a compromise, where Persephone would live for two thirds of the year with Demeter above ground, and one third of the year below. Rhea, Demeter's mother, persuaded her to accept this deal, and she agreed that while her daughter was with her, crops and plants would be able to grow.

Bride, also known as Brighid, Brigid, Brigit and Brid

Bride is an Irish goddess of fertility, inspiration and healing, who was the daughter of the *Dagda*, the supreme god of Celtic mythology. She is often shown as a triple goddess. She is ruler of arts and crafts and especially the skills of poetry, smith-craft and medicine. Music is also sacred to her and she was a patron of the sacred Bards. She is often likened to the spirit of the grain and corn dollies are traditionally made to honour and represent her. Her festival is *La Fheila Bride*, or Candlemas, celebrated at the beginning of February.

Isis and her consort Osiris

Isis [11] was originally a goddess of agriculture. She was the daughter of the Earth god Geb and the sky goddess Nut, her sister was Nephthys and her brothers were Horus the Elder, Osiris and Set. Isis married her brother, Osiris, and together they taught the Egyptians all the arts and sciences of civilisation. This was much to the distaste of Set who flew into a jealous rage at their success and

plotted his brother's downfall. One story recounts how he produced an amazing decorated chest made in the shape of a man. He threw a party and all the male guests tried to see if they would fit, yet none did. It was then Osiris' turn, and, to his surprise, he found he fitted perfectly. No sooner had he laid down, than Set slammed closed the heavy lid and threw the coffin in the Nile so that Osiris would drown. The grieving Isis, in the shape of a white bird, hunted high and low for the body of her consort. Eventually she found the coffin in the roots of a tree on the island of Byblos. Unfortunately, Set recaptured her husband and this time cut his body into fourteen pieces, which he scattered to the far corners of the land. Weeping bitterly, Isis eventually hunted all the pieces down, except for his phallus, which had been eaten by a Nile crab. After magically restoring his body and remaking his penis she was then able to conceive Horus the Younger. Thereafter, Osiris became Lord of the Dead and Horus his incarnation on Earth. The cult of Osiris, Isis and Horus became the most widespread and popular in Ancient Egypt. Isis gradually absorbed the qualities of most other goddesses, becoming something of a universal deity.

Gods

Cernunnos

Cernunnos is perhaps the foremost of male divinities that Witches draw upon and, yet, he is one of the most shady and difficult to define. He was a member of the Celtic pantheon and it is likely that he was intended to represent the spirit of horned animals, something that the snake-like creature with ram's horns often found by his side seems to emphasise. In particular, he was probably associated with the stag. Cernunnos may also have been seen as of a noble class and perhaps a god of fertility. Seated on the ground in a cross legged fashion, his posture seems almost meditative. However, no-one can be completely certain of these things as there are few written records, and any assertions about his nature are based on depictions found on cave walls, vessels and sculptures. The earliest of these seems to have been found at Val Camonica in Italy and dates from the 4th century BCE,

whilst the best known is on the Gundestrup cauldron found in Denmark, which dates to the 1st century BCE [12]. Such works give the geographical range of his worship, which would have stretched from Italy to Scandinavia. That he must have meant much the same to the Celts wherever he was worshipped, is evidenced by the consistency of the portrayals. He is nearly always found as an older man with a beard, and, because he wears a torc, the viewer is lead to an impression that he has a great stature within the community of deities. When coupled with a coin filled purse, often on or near his person, he seems to be a character of great wealth. For Witches, he is often seen as a symbol of maleness and an embodiment of the Horned God [13].

Lugh

Lugh (pronounced “loo”) is an Irish god from Ireland's mythological past who is often portrayed as a great monarch and hero. His father and mother's marriage was likely designed to ease tensions between his father's tribe, the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, and the Formorians, who were his mother's people. When he reached manhood, Lugh travelled to Tara to join the court of King Nuada of the *Tuatha Dé Danann*. He was eventually given command over the *Tuatha Dé*, and set about waging a successful campaign against the oppressive Fomorians, finally freeing the *Tuatha De Danann* from tyranny [14]. It is likely that *Lughnasadh* originally celebrated this victory, although some say Lugh created this festival in memory of his foster-mother, Tailtiu. Legend has it that the event was held on 1st August at the town that bore her name, which is now known as Teltown in County Meath [15]. As Lugh became mythologized he was associated with kingship, the Sun, trade, craftsmanship, tricksters, youthful exuberance and shining light. He also became a harvest god [16] and *Lughnasadh* seems to have turned into a kind of celebration of his triumph over the spirits of the Other World, who had tried to keep the August crops for themselves. In this form, the event survived long into Christian times and has been revived under a variety of names today. Modern Wicca has a variant of this festival, although its character has a slightly different

flavour than the original celebrations, which would have been funereal and martial [17]. *Lúnasa* is the Irish name for the month of August.

Herne

Herne the Hunter is a ghost or monster associated with Windsor Great Park. He is perhaps a manifestation of the Horned God, which can be based on connecting his name to the deity Cernunnos and the fact that they are both depicted as being antlered.

Perhaps the earliest account of this figure is from Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* in 1597:

*"Sometime a keeper here in Windsor Forest,
Doth all the winter-time, at still midnight,
Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns;
And there he blasts the tree, and takes the cattle,
And makes milch-kine yield blood, and shakes a chain
In a most hideous and dreadful manner.
You have heard of such a spirit, and well you know
The superstitious idle-headed eld
Receiv'd, and did deliver to our age,
This tale of Herne the Hunter for a truth."*

Pan

To Wiccans, Pan is a powerful god and an archetype of male virility and sexuality. In Greek mythology he is the guardian of shepherds and their flocks. Like a satyr he has the hindquarters, legs, and horns of a goat. In some legends he is the son of Zeus and in others the son of Hermes. His mother is said to be a nymph. Pan is famous for his sexual prowess, and often depicted with an erect phallus. His horns and cloven hooves were used by Christian artists and writers as a basis for the images of demons and Satan. Pan is also famous for his pipes and once challenged Apollo, the god of the lyre, to a musical contest. The gods agreed that Tmolus, the mountain-god, would adjudicate. Pan produced a lilting melody that both he and his companion Midas enjoyed. Then Apollo ran his fingers

through his lyre and Tmolus immediately gave the victory to Apollo. Unfortunately for him, Midas disagreed with the outcome and complained. Apollo would not put up with such defective hearing and gave Midas the ears of a donkey [18].

Tammuz

An ancient Babylonian myth relates that Tammuz [19] was the King of Uruk and consort of the goddess Ishtar. When out hunting he was gouged by a wild boar and mortally wounded. He fell to the realm of Death, which was ruled by the goddess Allat, sister of Ishtar. Grieving, his wife decided to brave the dark land of the Underworld and search for her beloved partner. She descended through seven gates and finally arrived at the realm of her sister. Eventually, Ishtar convinced Allat to release Tammuz, as well as all the other spirits of the deceased. From this moment on, the cycle of death and rebirth began. The myth has several layers of meaning, relating not only to the mysteries of regeneration, but the cycle of the seasons and Spirit's entry into the world of matter.

Balder

Balder [20] (sometimes known as Baldur) was the Scandinavian god of light and joy. He was the son of Odin and Frigg, who were king and queen of the gods. Frigg had a dream that Balder's life was threatened and resolved to make sure that he was safe. She extracted an oath from all the forces and beings in nature that they would not harm her son. Unfortunately, she forgot to bind the mistletoe to this oath. The gods were joyful at the news that Balder was safe and, by way of a celebration, threw stones and darts at him. However, the wicked trickster god Loki put a twig of mistletoe in the hands of Balder's twin, the blind god of darkness, Hoder. Laughingly, Loki asked him to throw it at his brother who fell to the ground, mortally wounded with a piercing to his heart.

After Balder's demise, the messenger Hermod, another of his brothers, was sent by Odin to the underworld to plead for his return. It was agreed that the god would be set free on condition that all things in the world would mourn for him. On hearing that everyone was to display their grief, Loki disguised himself as a

giantess and refused to take part, as a result the terms of the agreement were not met and Balder was prevented from returning to life.

Research Project

Wiccans have much knowledge about goddesses and gods. As you have learnt in the lesson this is because they have a sophisticated view of deity that expresses the various forces to be found in existence.

This month, your task is to research a goddess and a god that takes your interest. You may wish to add to your knowledge of the deities outlined in the lesson, or you may want to explore deities entirely of your own choosing. Finding a goddess and a god that you can relate to will be important in your personal magical development for a variety of reasons. They will become a part of your daily life, not only as a source for inspiration but will also allow you to work with the forces that they represent through rites and rituals, as well as the practice of magic.

There are many ways of tackling this project and in your research make sure that you at least consider the following:

- Origins in time and place.
- Lineage.
- What the deity symbolises.
- Powers and properties.
- Associated stories or myths.

As always, it is recommended that you write up your researches as an aid to forming your own views and memorising the material. If you feel able to share your researches with fellow students by posting your work on Magicka School's Forum (www.magickaschool.com/forum) then you are most welcome to do so.

Exercises

How did the meditation work go from Lesson One? Did you manage to find the time and space to practice regularly? Did you feel that you had reached a level of competence in the visualisations? If you did, well done, because the work that was set wasn't easy. If not, don't stress unduly; any magical work takes practice and it is quite usual to find meditation difficult for a considerable period of time. Remember, though, that practice really does make perfect and the secret is to maintain regularity whilst not overdoing things.

If you have found it useful, why not use the magical prayer that was introduced to you in last lesson before you carry out this month's magical work?

Below you are provided with a further meditation and your first simple spell.

The Cleansing Rain

This meditation is especially useful for dealing with stress and worries. One of the biggest barriers towards magical working is anxiety, for when the brain is preoccupied it is difficult to concentrate and there is no space to raise positive energy. It is important to note that the following exercise will not make the things that you are worrying over disappear. What it will do is help you to put them into perspective and allow you the freedom to dispense with them for a period of time. What distinguishes a person who is less stressed than others isn't the amount or quality of concerns that they have; it is how they deal with these things that counts.

This meditation can be done in various ways; it can be practiced in the shower, during light summer rain or as a visualisation in the comfort of a chair. Here I give the method for the latter, although it will be obvious how it can be adapted to the other two situations. Remember, Water represents negative, passive energy and is seen as having feminine qualities.

Light a candle in your meditation space. Use sandalwood or jasmine to perfume the air if you wish. Find a comfortable place to sit (lying down is not an

option). Breathe in for nine, hold for seven and breathe out for nine. Repeat this cycle for a few minutes.

When you are ready, imagine that a light warm shower of rain is rhythmically pouring down upon your head and shoulders. Think of the things that have been bothering you. As you do so see the worries pour from your mind, down with the water and through your arms and legs, until eventually they seep through your hands and feet into the ground. Don't be tempted to try to force them out. Don't wish anyone or anything bad will -this is very important as it can have effects that can greatly complicate your life. As your worries flow with the rain, say "I release you and allow you to pass harmlessly into infinity." Notice that it is you that is allowing the releasing into infinity and no-one else. It is you that has the control over the release process.

By releasing your worries and your fears you are beginning to let go of the hold that you have allowed for them to have over you. Some of you may be resistant to this notion at first. That is OK, such a reaction is normal. You will find, though, that it is very empowering to realise that you are part of your problem. By changing your behaviour, you will change your relationship to the source of your stress, and this in turn will then subtly change the dynamic of a situation in your favour.

As you feel the tension subside, see rays of sunshine appear through the clouds. Imagine a rainbow of shimmering light form in the sky. Know that this is a positive sign.

When you feel that you have given enough time to the outpouring of your anxieties become aware of your breathing again. Breathe in for nine, hold for seven and breathe out for nine. Repeat this pattern for a few minutes.

Spell: Cleansing

First a word about spells:

It is generally true to say that the best spells are the ones that a Witch writes for themselves. This somewhat negates the importance of books that provide collections of spells for set purposes, you know the kind of thing; *101 Love Potions*, *50 Spells To Make You Wealthy* etc. However, Witches need to learn how spells function, what they look and sound like, the possibilities of various techniques, and so on. One of the best ways to do this is to provide the trainee with some basics that they can then go away and adapt. There will be much more information about spells in a later lesson on magic in this work.

The Importance of Cleansing

Cleansing a space is very important as it frees the atmosphere from the residues of energy and events that have taken place within it. The amount of cleansing done will depend on the individual. Some Witches like to cleanse their living space at regular intervals to keep it “psychically fresh” whilst others reserve the cleansing process for a traumatic event. However, all Witches use cleansing regularly in their magical space. This is important as magic is difficult to effect in places where the Witch feels uncomfortable and under negative influences.

Cleansing works by giving the Witch the sense that they control the psychic happenings in the area that they have chosen to work in. Whether one explains this purely as psychology, or as the magical control of occult forces, makes little difference. The fact is, it is believed to work, and, as you will learn throughout this course, belief is one of the most important keys to magical working.

The method of ground and centre, will, visualise, bless, seal, release (in varying combinations or with one or two additions) is common to all spell work.

Ground and Centre

Before starting any magical work it is important to use the technique of grounding and centring. A quick way to do this is to visualise a bright beam of light that stretches from just above your head down through your spine and into

the ground. Allow yourself to feel the exchange of energy between you and the Earth and centre yourself upon the balance of energies, breathing in and out slowly as you do so. This will have the effect of harmonising energy within you before you start the spell work.

Will

Next set your intention. What is it that you want to will to be done? In effect this is setting your goal; try to be as specific as possible. An appropriate intention for this spell could be expressed as:

“I charge that this space shall be cleansed of all harmful negativity. I cast it from this place so that it returns safely to the Goddess who may recycle it as she sees fit.”

Visualise

Hold your right arm in front of you and point your index finger at the centre of the space you wish to cleanse. Now visualise a bright clear white light shooting forth from your finger. See the light entering the area and fill it completely. As you do this concentrate (but don't strain) on seeing the negativity completely dissipate.

Bless

Blessing is very important -it creates good feeling in all who hear it, including the speaker, and affirms the work in hand.

“I bless this space and all who come to be in it. May the light forever fill it and them.”

Seal

Now seal the spell by uttering words of power. A favourite of Wiccans is “*So mote it be*”.

Release

A quick way of releasing energy is to imagine that bright light pours from your hands and feet down to the ground. For those of you who live in high rises it is important to see it dissipating into the Earth below the building. You can also use the Tree Meditation from Lesson One to get rid of any energy left floating around from the spell.

End Blessing

I hope that you have benefited from your first two lessons in the *Wicca Revealed* course. Have you noticed changes begin to take place in your life as you have turned your attention towards the Wiccan religion and its beliefs and practices?

May the great Goddess and God aid you in the positive goals to which you aspire, by helping align the energies of existence favourably.

Blessed Be,

In Love and Light,

See you next lesson!

Notes

[1] Such a view can be built from C. G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, Picador, 1978, p.58, 69, 78, 85, 87 and 90.

[2] This was originally added into Wicca by the Farrars in *Eight Sabbats for Witches*, Hale, 1992, pp. 24-7. The Oak and Holly King were based on ideas in *The White Goddess, A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*, by Robert Graves, first published in 1948.

[3] Aleister Crowley, John Symonds and Kenneth Grant ed., *The Complete Astrological Writings*, 1988, p.42. The Sun crosses the equator at the autumn equinox and dips below it which can be seen as a kind of crucifixion. This, of course, contrasts strongly with the crucifixion of Jesus at Easter, around the time of the vernal equinox.

[4] Published today as Charles G. Leland, *Aradia or the Gospel of the Witches*, Phoenix Publishing Inc, 1999.

[5] Ibid., quoted on the back cover.

[6] See J.B. Russell, *A History of Witchcraft, Sorcerers, Heretics and Pagans*, Thames and Hudson, 1991, pp.148-52.

[7] See Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon, A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp.145-146.

[8] Charles G. Leland, op. cit. pp.18-20.

[9] It needs to be stated here that this is not the notion of Lucifer in a Christian sense. For Wiccans, Lucifer was the angel of light who fell into existence on the Material Plane. This descent from Spirit into physical manifestation has nothing whatsoever to do with a descent into evil that rejects goodness.

[10] Charles G. Leland, op. cit., p.5.

[11] On the Isis and Osiris myth see Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Clarendon Press, 2000 pp.364-8.

[12] The Gundestrup cauldron was found in Himmerland, Denmark, 1891 and is currently housed in the Danish National Museum, Copenhagen.

[13] See <http://www.pantheon.org/areas/mythology/europe/celtic/articles.html> for many articles on Celtic deities.

[14] An account of Lugh's decisive campaign can be found in the *Cath Maige Tuireadb* or *Battle of Magh Tuireadb* here <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T300010/index.html>

[15] On this see Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*, p.302.

[16] Ibid, p.301

[17] Ibid, p.302

[18] Artwork depicting this famous story can be found here <http://www.uwm.edu/Course/mythology/0600/apollo.htm>

[19] On Tammuz see Frazer, Ibid, pp.325-6.

[20] An excellent source for the Baldur myth is *The Prose Edda*, which can be found at <http://www.northvegr.org/lore/prose/index.php>

Chapter Three: Ceremonial Basics

Ceremonial Basics

Merry Meet and Welcome to the Class!

Welcome to the third lesson of *Wicca Revealed*! Your continuing commitment has meant that you are advancing steadily to becoming Wiccan and truly learning a new way of life.

In this lesson you will learn about:

The basic ceremonial framework of Wicca.

Continuing on, there is a research project for you to complete.

There are also a number of magical exercises for you to work on.

Finally, there is a blessing.

The Ceremonial Framework of Wicca

As you are beginning to learn, Wiccans have a programme of regular meetings and festivities throughout the course of a year. Esbats are regular monthly gatherings at the Full Moon, whilst the eight Sabbats (four Greater and four Lesser) are celebrations that mark the stages of the year and are based on the cycles of agriculture and the Sun. In later lessons we will be exploring the Esbats and Sabbats in more detail. There are a number of ceremonial practices that form the basis of these events. Moreover, some of these, like the casting of the circle, are also used on other occasions such as when magic is practiced. They are fundamental to the whole notion of the Craft, and this is the reason why they are presented to you at such an early stage in your studies.

The Opening of the Temple: Preparation

The Opening of the Temple is the key ritual of Wicca as, with the proper preparation of sacred space, Witches set up the environment within which they

work, whether this be within a room in their house, beneath the trees of a forest, or underneath the elements and the sky.

The temple takes the form of a circle. This classic shape has always been used in Wicca for magical work as it is believed that it contains and intensifies energies, as well as having the added benefit of providing psychic protection. How this came to be, as opposed to say a square, is a debateable point and there are a number of theories. Some think that the circle is a shape engrained into the psyche of humankind through the aeons spent round the campfire and that it is natural that we should return to such a primordial shape when practicing magic. Others see that it is the most natural layout to use when working with a number of individuals in something that requires direct participation from all concerned. Whatever its origins, those practicing magic have for many centuries used the circle, and it is perhaps to be expected that it should be used in Wicca.

Preparing the Space

Before beginning, space needs to be cleared for the casting of the circle. How large it will be depends on how many people are intending to take part. Traditionally, a circle is five feet in diameter for one person and nine feet in diameter for a thirteen-member coven. In reality, though, not every solitary has five feet of spare space and not every coven has thirteen members. When working with others one of the most effective ways to judge space is to get members to hold hands in a ring, with arms half outstretched, before the circle is cast. This will indicate a comfortable amount of distance between individuals.

One of the essential features of the circle are the Quarters [1] or cardinal compass point directions of East, South, North and West. Many Witches believe that the energy of the Earth should be brought into proper alignment with their ceremonies and use a compass to know where these points are to be found. Others feel that symbolic directions are fine. All, though, make use of the cardinal directions (real or symbolic) when laying out ritual tools and for certain key movements and words.

These points have a variety of correspondences that the novice Witch should familiarise themselves with. For the sake of convenience some of the main ones have been summarised in the table below [2]:

	East	South	West	North
Associated Archangel	Raphael	Michael	Gabriel	Uriel (sometimes spelt Auriel)
Element	Air	Fire	Water	Earth
Wind	Eurus	Notus	Zephyrus	Boreus
Elemental Creature	Sylph	Salamander	Undine	Gnome
Goddess	Maid	Mother	Crone	Infant
God	Young God	Horned God	Old Wise God	Infant
Zodiac Sign	Aries	Cancer	Libra	Capricorn
Seasons	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
Sun cycle	Spring Equinox	Mid-Summer Solstice	Autumn Equinox	Mid-Winter Solstice
Life Stages	Youth, Initiation	Adulthood, Vitality	Death, Repose	Gestation, Birth
Time of Day	Dawn	Noon	Dusk	Night
The Four Faculties	Thought	Intuition	Emotion	Sensation
Colours	Yellow	Red	Blue	Black

The Altar

Different traditions of Wicca set their altars in different places and even within traditions there are often no hard and fast rules. Some use the North, some the circle centre and others the East [3]. This book advocates the East; this is because

much of the Wiccan Opening of the Temple ceremony is based on Golden Dawn magical practice, which starts many of its ceremonies in that direction [4]. It is the place of new beginnings and light and fits with Magicka's whole philosophy on life. However, there is no reason why you should not set your altar in the North if that is what you prefer (make sure though that you know why you have placed it there).

Altars can be anything from a cloth laid on the floor, or a coffee table, to a specially carved stone made for the sole purpose of worship and the practice of magic. Any of these objects is appropriate and you should not feel any lesser a Witch just because you don't have an impressive looking altar of the finest Italian marble. It is what you do with it that counts and not what it looks like.

How the altar is decorated will depend on the ceremony or work in hand, and, in later lessons on the Esbats and Sabbats, some possible options will be discussed in detail. In general though, Witches use the altar as a place upon which to put their tools.

These can vary from tradition to tradition but generally include:

The pentacle, usually placed in the centre (the pentacle is a round, flat object, often made of wood, stone or metal, upon which are carved certain symbols of the Craft, more of which in a later lesson)

The East candle (coloured yellow)

Two altar candles (generally white, of the thick "church candle" variety)

A chalice (filled with water)

The wand

The Witch's athame (or black handled knife. Athame is pronounced "ath-a-may" and not "a-thame")

A cup filled with wine

A plate of cakes or biscuits

A small bowl or dish of salt

A censer

A scourge

And a sword (this is often placed beneath the altar and can be used to cast the circle -in general solitary Witches don't have this expensive item and it is usually something that a coven clubs together and buys).

Many Witches consider the Goddess and God as well as the Four Elements when laying out these tools and allocate them to different areas of the altar. This is indicated by the table below:

Left: Goddess	Centre	Right: God
Water and Earth		Air and Fire
Cup of wine Salt Biscuits	Pentacle Chalice	Athame Wand Censer

Such an arrangement is not strictly necessary but can be a nice touch to remind those present of the importance of the deities, as well as the four building blocks of life and their connection to the tools.

Perfuming the Air

Most Witches use incense to perfume the air when setting up their sacred space. Different fragrances are used depending on the type of work being carried out. Standard choices are sandalwood, jasmine and frankincense.

Candles

Usually each of the four cardinal points has a candle assigned to it. Different traditions use differing colours. This work advocates using yellow for the East (corresponding to Air), red for the South (corresponding to Fire), Blue for the West (corresponding to Water) and black for the North (corresponding to Earth) [5]. Some solitaires and covens light the candles as part of the opening ritual,

others light them before. In the following version it is assumed that they have been lit before the ceremony starts.

Music

It is a good idea to have a collection of music for ceremonial and magical work and the choice of material will depend on the individual's or group's tastes.

Clothing

Many Wiccans prefer to perform their work skyclad (i.e. naked) in the belief that this makes them closer to natural forces and is also a way of honouring their bodies. So make sure the heating is on in when it's cold. There is no reason, though, why one should not wear loose fitting robes made from natural fibres, and at times this may well be more appropriate, especially when working outdoors when there is the possibility of others looking on, or if the weather is inclement.

Now that all these considerations have been taken into account the circle can at last be cast.

The Opening of the Temple: Ceremony

One: Casting the Circle

The following has been written for one Witch to perform as most students at Magicka School, and readers of this book, are solitaires or, if not, spend at least some of their time practicing alone (at the end of the main lesson topic a ceremony suitable for a coven is given for the sake of completeness. This can also be adapted for a family) [6].

Kneel down in front of the altar. Place the tip of your athame into the bowl of water and say:

"I charge you, creature of water, that you be pure and clean of all phantasmal influences in the name of the Goddess and God (throughout the ceremony these terms are used, students should choose whichever goddess and god they feel most comfortable working with)."

Then place the tip of the athame into the bowl of salt and say:

“I bless this creature of salt, may it serve to cleanse, purify and bring goodness to all that it comes into contact with, in the names of the Goddess and the God.”

Pour some of the salt into the chalice of water on the altar.

Get up and with your athame draw the circle from East to East in a *deosil* [7] direction. It is very important that when doing this that you concentrate on sending out energy down through your arm, through the athame and into the space being created. You may find that it helps greatly to visualise a blue white light streaming from the end of your blade.

Place your athame back on the altar and pick up the chalice. Sprinkle the salty water lightly round the circle you have just cast, again from East to East.

Now repeat the process using the censer.

Each time concentrate on what you are doing.

This process effectively cleanses and removes any unwanted or negative energies that may be stirred into action by the process of creating a sacred space. By carrying out such an operation it will also prevent any unwanted forces from returning. Negative energies can be a range of things; they can be anything from latent emotions to unwanted spiritual energy or entities. All can cause “bad vibes” and get in the way of the work to be carried out.

It is also important to note that the circle was created with representatives of the Four Elements. Flame or Fire was envisaged coming from the blade of the athame; Water, mixed with the Earth substance of salt, was sprinkled round the room; and the censer created a perfumed circle in the Air.

Two: Invoking the Archangels

The second part of the operation involves what is generally known as the “Hailing” or “Summoning of the Guardians of the Watchtowers”. You will come across various ways of doing this and some famous Witches leave out this aspect of the ceremony altogether [8]. This part of the Opening of the Temple is very much based on Golden Dawn magical practice and my teachings on this area are closer than most traditions will come to the original, as much more use of angelic

forces is made than is typical [9]. When I set up my temple [10] the Archangels are invoked.

Face East. Hold out your athame and draw an invoking pentagram of Earth.



Thrust your athame through the centre and say:

“Before me Raphael, Archangel [11] of the East and of Air, I do invoke thee and ask that you watch over these my sacred rites, bringing to them your powers of healing and compassion”.

Open out your arms and concentrate on visualising a fair-haired angel, radiating light and holding a caduceus wand, with robes of bright yellow trimmed with violet, flowing in the wind.

Next, turn to the South. With your athame draw another invoking pentagram of Earth and utter:

“Before me Michael [12], Archangel of the South and of Fire, I do invoke thee and ask that you watch over these my sacred rites, bringing to them your powers of protection and purification.”

Again, open out your arms and visualise a flame-haired angel, dressed in scarlet red with emerald green trim, holding up a sword, from which burns bright flame.

Now turn to the West. Repeat the drawing of the pentagram and intone:

“Before me Gabriel [13], Archangel of the West and of Water, I do invoke thee and ask that you watch over these my sacred rites, bringing to them your powers of emotion and fluidity.”

Open your arms and see a red-headed angel, wearing blue robes trimmed with orange, holding out a large silver chalice.

Turn to the North, trace a pentagram once more and say:

“Before me Uriel [14], Archangel of the North and of Earth, I do invoke thee and ask that you watch over these my sacred rites, bringing to them your powers of sensation and solidity.”

Open your arms one last time and concentrate on seeing a straw-haired angel, wearing robes of citrine, olive and russet, trimmed with black, who holds out a sheaf of corn.

Face East and say:

“Around me burn the flaming pentagrams while the Great Archangels look on” [15].

Three: Drawing Down the Moon

The next part of opening the temple involves drawing down the power of the Moon.

Turn towards the centre of the circle. Raise your arms upwards and say words to the effect of:

*“Silver faced Lady, with bright starry gown
I ask that your light forever pours down.
Down on the seas that move to your pull,
Down on plant leaves that bud green and full.
Down on the land bathed in your light,
And down on my circle on this sacred night.*

*Diana and Isis, Lucina the Sheen
Many your names forever have been.
Cerridwen, Freya, Astarte and Maat,
Moon influenced Goddesses deep in my heart.*

*Descend lovely Lady, come to my rites,
For magic I make on this sacred night.”*

Four: Invoking the God

It is time now to call upon the God. Turn and face the altar and give the God salute. This is made by bending the second and third fingers into the palm of the hand and keeping the first and forth upright.

Say words similar to:

*“Great God, I ask you, return to this land.
Protect my magic rites with your powerful hands.
Give me the strength to do what I may,
With the power of the Sunlight,
The God of the day.*

*Horned one, I ask you to show me the path,
Guide and shepherd me
With your merry laugh.
Be with me ever, all through my times,
With music and laughter and song full of rhyme.”*

Five: *The Witches’ Rune*

The next part of the ceremony is *The Witches Rune* [16]:

Chant:

*“Darksome night and shining moon,
East, then South, then West, then North;
Hearken to the Witches’ Rune-
Here I come to call ye forth.*

*Earth and Water, Air and Fire,
Wand and pentacle and sword,
Work ye unto my desire,
Hearken ye unto my word!*

*Cords and censer, scourge and knife,
Powers of the Witches' blade-
Waken ye all unto life,
Come ye as the charm is made!*

*Queen of heaven, Queen of hell,
Horned hunter of the night-
Lend your power unto the spell,
And work my will by magic rite!*

*By all the power of land and sea,
By all the might of moon and sun-
As I do will, so mote it be:
Chant the spell and it be done!"*

With this the Opening of the Temple is now complete.

What follows next will depend on whether the circle has been cast for an Esbat or Sabbat ceremony, or whether it has been cast for other reasons such as the practice of specific magical work. It should be noted that if a short spell is to be performed, most Wiccans will not use the whole of the above ceremony and often just use Part One. This is entirely up to you, and will reflect the nature of the work you intend to carry out.

You should practice the ceremony over the course of the month until you know the whole thing by heart. This is important. Fumbling around later on in the course, trying to remember words and movements, will greatly hinder the performance of more advanced work. Special care should be taken when tracing the invoking pentagrams, make a real effort to mark these out as accurately as possible.

Those of you who are poetical can write your own words for Drawing Down the Moon and calling on the God, if you want. This level of creativity is usual

within the Craft and you will find many different Wiccan authors have their own versions, so why not you?

Consecration of the Cakes and Wine (or Ale)

Once all work has been carried out and completed within the circle it is normal to have a period of relaxation within its confines and eat and drink some nourishing food. Magic can be tiring work and it is good to replenish energy. Eating of cakes and the drinking of wine or ale is especially common within covens and even some solitaires will adhere to it.

Stand in front of the altar; place the tip of your athame in the cup of red wine.
Say:

“Male and female are now joined within this sacred cup.”

Draw an invoking pentagram of Earth above the cakes or biscuits with your athame and intone:

“Great Goddess, bless this food that we will know the value of your sustenance.”

With this the cakes and wine can now be enjoyed. Some Wiccans like to save a cake and a little of the wine for after the circle is taken down. These are then sprinkled outside as an offering to the Earth.

Taking Down the Temple

You have created sacred space with the Opening of the Temple and will have raised energy within it to carry out various Wiccan practices. It is important that it is now taken down correctly. This will have the effect of preventing any psychical energy from hanging around and going stale. It has the psychological effect of completeness and, perhaps most importantly, it gives the opportunity to say thanks to the entities that have been worked with.

Different traditions have different ways of dismantling the circle [17]. I teach that this process should start in the North of the circle and proceed *deosil*. This is

so that the process finishes in the West. The West is the direction of death and endings and it seems appropriate that the circle should end at this point [18].

Face North

Draw a banishing pentagram of Earth.



Say:

“Uriel, Archangel of the North and of Earth, we do thank you for attending our magical rites. Salutations and farewell!”

Give a little bow and envisage the Archangel doing the same. Blow [19] out the North candle.

Next, turn towards the East.

Trace a banishing pentagram. Intone:

“Raphael, Archangel of the East and of Air, we do thank you for attending our magical rites. Salutations and farewell!”

Bow to the Archangel and wait for him to respond. Snuff out the East candle. Leave the altar candles burning though as without their light the ritual space will be put into complete darkness when the West candle is put out.

Now turn South. Draw a banishing pentagram and say:

“Michael, Archangel of the South and of Fire, we do thank you for attending our magical rites. Salutations and farewell!”

Bow once more and extinguish the South candle.

Turn to the West. Draw a banishing pentagram of Earth with your athame.
Intone:

“Gabriel, Archangel of the West and of Water, we do thank you for attending our magical rites. Salutations and farewell!”

Bow a final time and watch the Archangel do likewise. Put out the West candle.

The Temple has now been closed.

The Opening of the Temple -A Version for Covens

A Note about Family Practice

Some Wiccans like to include their children in their rituals. Whether or not you do this is a matter of choice. Some are against allowing their children to take part until they are eighteen, some until they are at least teenagers, others let them participate from a very early age. On one hand, Witches argue that children should be free to choose their religion and that they should only know of its intimate practices when they have reached an age when they are capable of making an informed choice. Others have the view that an informed choice is impossible, without having close knowledge of ceremonies. There is also a middle ground where children are informed and included to a point, but that they don't get to take part in most rituals. Whatever you decide, the following can easily be adapted for a family should you so wish, and this goes for all the group rituals given in *Wicca Revealed* from now on.

This version assumes that the coven has a High Priestess and High Priest, as well as a few coven members. It is loosely based on the *Gardnerian Book of Shadows* [20].

The space is set up as in the Opening of the Temple for solitaires.

The High Priestess and High Priest kneel down in front of the altar, the Priestess to the left. The rest of the coven members wait outside what will become the circle space in the North East.

The High Priestess picks up the chalice of water and presents it to the High Priest. He places the tip of his athame into the liquid and says:

"I charge you, creature of water, that you be pure and clean of all phantasmal influences in the name of the Goddess and God."

The chalice is then placed on top of the altar pentacle.

Notice here that the High Priestess picks up the "feminine" chalice and that the High Priest uses the "masculine" athame, these roles are reversed for the salt.

The High Priest picks up the bowl of salt. The High Priestess puts the tip of her athame into it and says:

"I bless this creature of salt, may it serve to cleanse, purify and bring goodness to all that it comes into contact with, in the names of the Goddess and the God."

The High Priest then pours some of the salt into the bowl of water on the altar.

The High Priest gets up and stands to the North East of the circle. The High Priestess commences to draw the circle, *deosil*, from East to East with the coven sword. When finished, she places her sword back underneath the altar and then picks up the bowl of water. She sprinkles the salty liquid lightly round the circle she has just cast, again, *deosil*, from East to East.

The process is then repeated using the censer.

The High Priestess then admits the High Priest into the circle with a kiss. The High Priest welcomes the next Witch, and so on. All enter moving *deosil* in the direction of the East, with the High Priestess coming back to the altar after completing one round trip. Just before she takes up her position, she should also close the circle gap in the North East, from where the coven were admitted, moving her athame in a left-right-left motion over the space.

Two: Invoking the Archangels

The second part of the operation involves the High Priestess invoking the Archangels in exactly the same way as above, except that all coven members turn

towards the cardinal points in unison with her, and give a little bow as each of the Archangels is welcomed.

Three: Drawing Down the Moon

Traditionally, in a coven setting, the High Priest draws down the energies of the Moon onto the High Priestess.

The High Priest kneels in front of the High Priestess and will say words similar to:

*“Mother of us all,
Bright and divine
Come down to the Earth
On our Priestess shine
Descend to her body
Come down to our rites
Fair silver Lady
On this sacred night”*

As he says this with his right forefinger he will touch the High Priestess on her right breast, left breast, womb and then kiss her right foot and left foot.

The High Priestess draws an invoking pentagram of Earth between herself and the High Priest, and replies with words similar to:

*“Mother of severity, Mother of the kiss,
The five pointed pentagram of love and bliss
I charge you in this sacred sign.”*

Four: The Charge of the Goddess

The *Charge of the Goddess* was part of the original *Gardnerian Book of Shadows* [21]. The High Priestess says the words:

“Whenever ye have need of anything, once in the month, and better it be when the moon is full. Then ye shall assemble in some secret place and adore the spirit of Me who am Queen of all Witcheries. There ye shall assemble, ye who are fain to learn all sorcery, yet who have not won its

deepest secrets. To these will I teach things that are yet unknown. And ye shall be free from slavery, and as a sign that ye be really free, ye shall be naked in your rites, and ye shall dance, sing, feast, make music, and love, all in my praise. For mine is the ecstasy of the Spirit, and mine is also joy on Earth. For my Law is Love unto all beings. Keep pure your highest ideals. Strive ever towards it. Let naught stop you or turn you aside. For mine is the secret which opens upon the door of youth; and mine is the cup of the Wine of Life: and the Cauldron of Cerridwen, which is the Holy Grail of Immortality. I am the Gracious Goddess who gives the gift of Joy unto the heart of Man. Upon Earth I give the knowledge of the Spirit Eternal, and beyond death I give peace and freedom, and reunion with those who have gone before. Nor do I demand aught in sacrifice, for behold, I am the Mother of all things, and my love is poured out upon Earth.”

Five: The God

All coven members now turn and face East. All male members make the sign of the God. The High Priest says the same lines to invoke the God as in the ceremony for solitaires above.

Six: *The Witches’ Rune*

All members of the coven chant *The Witches’ Rune* and dance round the circle as they do so. This is led by the High Priestess, she may choose to keep *The Rune* repeating over and over for as long as she likes, finally she says “Down” (making sure she is back in front of the altar) and all members then sit.

Taking Down the Temple –Coven Version

This is exactly the same as the method given above, with a couple of exceptions. The High Priestess has responsibility for drawing the banishing pentagrams of Earth, thanking the Archangels and blowing out the candles. Throughout, all other coven members face the appropriate directions and give bows, following the lead of the High Priestess.

Research Project

As has been pointed out throughout the course of this chapter, the Opening of the Temple that has been given is only one way of doing things. There are, in fact, whole hosts of ways it can be done and each Wiccan author will give their preferred method.

It will be a good thing for you to get some idea of the various possibilities. You can then pick and choose what you feel most comfortable with. Try to find out what Gardnerians and Alexandrians do and then branch out from there. Authors you might like to look at are the Farrars, Starhawk, Raymond Buckland, Scott Cunningham or Marion Greene.

If you are keen to make up your own version of the ceremony, make sure that you understand why things are as they are. Look closely at how the Goddess and the God are used, as well as the tools, the Quarters and the Archangels. Why do you think things are arranged as they are?

Apply the same kind of critical technique to other authors. When you have done this you then have a great overview from which to begin creating.

As always, if you wish, you can post your research projects onto the Magicka Forum (www.magickaschool.com/forum). There will be many students who will be interested in what you have found out, and it will encourage others to take the plunge if you do decide to post.

Exercises

As stated above, the Opening of the Temple should be learnt by heart. The best way to do this is to actually perform it several times a week with notes at first, weaning yourself gradually away from them. I will not be expecting you to learn all the ceremonies by heart (if you want to though, then that's great), but it will make a big difference to be able to recite this often-used ritual without relying on prompts or faltering.

Don't worry yet if you haven't had the chance to assemble all your magical tools. Obtaining a container of water, a bowl of salt and a little incense presents no difficulty and instead of an athame you can just as effectively use your finger. If you are inclined to allow yourself to feel stupid doing this, then don't. Most Witches will tell you that tools aren't 100% necessary, and that at the end of the day a Witch shouldn't have to rely on them to practice. The power is worked through you and not through the objects. Also, it is probably a good idea to wait for the next lesson on tools before you start keeping a magical supplies store in business, so that you have a clear idea of what you want before you buy. You may, in any case, decide to make some, or all of them, by hand.

Today you are also going to start a number of exercises in preparation for the lesson on magic. Some of these may surprise you but I hope that I have made my reasoning clear.

Physical Exercise and Diet

At first glance it may seem odd to find such a subject included in a list of things to do before starting magical training in earnest. However, magic relies on you being able to raise copious amounts of energy and to be able to do this demands that you be in good physical shape [22]. This doesn't mean you need to be super-fit or work out at a gym. But if you are a couch potato type or Internet-junky it does mean that you should get out and do something physical for around thirty to forty-five minutes, three or four times a week [23]. Go on a bike ride, a

walk for several miles, a jog, anything as long as it gets you out in the elements and moving. It also means that if your diet is poor you should alter that as well. Eat less refined foods, especially sugar, cut down on the salt and caffeine. Or better still cut out caffeine completely, no more cola drinks (including diet versions) coffee or tea –do this gradually though, you will get whanging headaches and become very irritable if you just go cold turkey. Eat lots of vegetables and fruit [24]. You will notice that you are less tired and more able to focus and concentrate, and, as we will be discussing next, being able to control your will is the primary thing that any magical practitioner must achieve.

The Will

Perhaps the most important thing you can do as you begin to learn magic is to increase your will power. All truly successful magicians have highly trained minds and an ability to concentrate on things unwaveringly for extended periods of time. If you don't develop this power within yourself, your results will be sporadic and lacking any true effectiveness.

Now, for the new student eager to get on with the course and all the exciting things Wicca has to offer, nothing can be duller than to be told go away and first develop your mental faculties. And yet, this is one of the most useful and important things you can do. It will benefit not only your Wiccan studies, and the art of magic, but will have a huge impact on all areas of your life.

Already on the course you will have been using meditations and one or two magical exercises. If you are serious about becoming a Witch and practicing magic then a regular regime is essential.

Over this month there are four exercises for you to try. Do one each week to help develop your will power.

They are frankly non-glamorous and may not seem at all exciting. Some of you may be wondering where all the candles, robes, words of power, and magical tools

have gone. They will come by the time you have finished this course but first you need to begin to develop your mind.

You may find that not only are these seemingly simple exercises quite challenging, but also that doing them regularly is a struggle. This is to be expected; you will not be carrying them out in your special meditation space but out in the outside world where there are numerous distractions. There is no easy solution to this; all you can do is to gradually develop your ability of concentration. Don't be too ambitious in terms of time spent on the exercises. If you can do them well for just one minute, every day for a month, you have done something truly amazing at such an early stage in your development.

One

Choose a regular time of day when you are going somewhere but don't have to drive (this is important, don't try this when in charge of a car), this could be on the bus to school, the train to work, when you walk the dog, the trip down the road for the day's paper, etc [25].

For the first week pick a colour, and make a conscious note of everything you see of that hue for up to five minutes. Sounds easy? Here's the difficult bit. During those minutes try hard not to think of anything else other than the colour you should be thinking of. Unless you are wildly and unusually talented at concentration your mind will wander quite quickly, and you'll find yourself thinking about who's getting on the bus, whether you left the gas on, work worries, what you're doing tonight and so on. When you catch yourself wandering try not to feel cross or disappointed, it is perfectly normal and to be expected (for many weeks or months). Don't, whatever you do, berate yourself and screw up your face in determined concentration, it won't have the desired effect (and others around you will think you're weird). Bring your mind gently back to the colour you chose and continue. Don't spend more than five minutes a day trying. You will get frustrated and end up not doing the exercise. When you get back home make a note of all the things you saw in your Book of Shadows or Book of Mirrors.

Many of you will find that you never realised how many things were in the colour that you chose. This is a significant stage to be at and is an important magical key, which will be picked up in a later chapter.

Two

During the next week, choose up to five objects or things that you pass by every day of your life.

Spend up to a minute examining how the object or thing has changed since yesterday. Some things may be easy -a newspaper billboard will change everyday, for example. If you have chosen obviously altering things try something a little more challenging like a tree or even a lamppost.

Again, when you get home, make a note of the things that you studied.

This exercise will make you look at things that you hardly ever notice or focus on, and, just as importantly, it will show you that all things change. No one journey is ever identical (no matter how bored you may be of your daily travels), and all things in your journey are in a state of flux. Nothing is ever the same. This is important to realise, for the creative interplay between non-static objects is another crucial part of making magic, as it stimulates creativity and imagination.

Three

For this week, concentrate on five different sounds a day that you hear on your journey. Make sure that at the end of each day you record what you have heard in your Book of Shadows.

This exercise gets you to focus on using your sense of hearing. This is important as a Witch strives to use all their senses in making magic.

Four

During week four, give attention to five different tactile experiences that you have on your journey. Again, make sure that at the end of each day you record what you have felt in your Book of Shadows.

This exercise gets you to focus on another sense. If you don't want to use touch, then try smell.

It cannot be stressed enough how important it is to do the above exercises before you try more challenging things. Your patience will pay huge dividends later.

End Blessing

I sincerely hope that you are continuing to enjoy the course and that it is providing you with a detailed overview of Wiccan theory and practice. Once you start practicing the Opening of the Temple you will probably begin to feel that you are making real progress.

Please make sure that you carry out the preliminaries to the practice of magic, as this will make a big difference to your experiences of it.

May you find a sense of joy and completeness as you begin to work with the divine energies within sacred space.

Blessed Be,

In Love and Light,

See you next lesson!

Notes

[1] Some traditions refer to these as *Airts* a Scottish word, which means “wind” and pronounced “eights”.

[2] Please note that such correspondences are never an exact science and you will find a number of variants as you continue your studies.

[3] Gardnerians and Alexandrians generally use the North, see the Farrars' *A Witches' Bible*, Phoenix Publishing Inc, 1996, p.36 for confirmation of this. Buckland advocates the centre, see *The Complete Book of Witchcraft*, Llewellyn, 2003 p. 65.

[4] Generally Golden Dawn magicians have their altar in the centre of the circle, see Chic Cicero and Sandra Tabitha Cicero, *Self-Initiation into the Golden Dawn Tradition*, Llewellyn, 2003, p.23. However, most of their magical practices begin in the East and for convenience, as well as the associations written of above, I place my altar there.

[5] These colours derive from those used in some areas of Golden Dawn circle casting. Other combinations are possible, Gardnerians, for example, use yellow for Air and the East, red for Fire and the South, blue for Water and the West, and green for Earth and the North. Sometimes I am asked why black for the North? Black can be used as it represents the dark from which the New God is reborn. In terms of Kabbalah it is one of the colours that represents Earth and Final Form (the others being Citrine, Russet and Olive).

[6] There are a variety of ways to cast a circle. You may want to research others although you will find that they are all broadly similar.

[7] *Deosil* is a word of Gaelic provenance that means “in the way of the Sun” it is pronounced more or less as “Jeshil”.

[8] In particular, see the comments of Raymond Buckland, op.cit., p.283. He regards that Ceremonial Magic has crept into Witchcraft over the centuries and that this is something that should not be encouraged. However, this viewpoint is

based on the idea that Wicca was a pre-Gerald Gardner phenomena. As has already been discussed, this is a belief not generally adhered to within the Wiccan community. In any case, right from the outset Gardner and Doreen Valiente incorporated Ceremonial Magic into their rites and most traditions of Wicca have followed suit to a greater or lesser extent.

[9] Generally Wiccans hail the “Lords of the Watchtowers”. Whilst there is nothing wrong with this, I prefer to base this part of the ceremony firmly on the Golden Dawn’s “Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram”. This was Gerald Gardner’s main inspiration for this part of the ceremony. The use of the Archangels gives a clear notion of the forces that the Quarters represent. An invoking pentagram and not a banishing one is used, as the ceremony for Wiccans is all about opening oneself as a divine channel, and not so much about protection from wayward spirits. Those that want a more traditional Wiccan take on things could start their exploration with a look at *A Witches’ Bible*, especially pp.35-47.

[10] This term is used to mean that the individual opens themselves to the divine forces within and without themselves. The Archangels are often seen as a bridge between the human and the divine and their use here seems entirely appropriate. Notice that they are not hailed or summoned, as both these words can suggest that somehow they are here at one's beck and call.

[11] The Archangels should be seen as being sexless. Please note that for literary convenience in a number of lessons they have been referred to as “he”. Raphael should be pronounced as “Raf-eye- elle”.

[12] Michael should be pronounced as “Mick-eye-elle”.

[13] Pronounced “Gab-ree-elle”.

[14] Pronounced “Ooo-ree-elle”.

[15] This phrase, of course, owes much to the Golden Dawn’s “For around me flames the pentagram and in the columns the six rayed star”.

[16] *The Witches Rune* was written by Doreen Valiente and has long been a standard work used within many traditions. I have omitted the first and last verse which reads:

“Eko, Eko, Azarak,
Eko, Eko, Zomelak,
Eko, Eko, Cernunnos,
Eko, Eko, Aradia.”

This is because Valiente herself (as far as I am aware) was unable to give a satisfactory account of their meaning (See, *A Witches' Bible*, p. 45) and, frankly, I did not want to use words that could not be explained. However, they are included here so that those that feel differently can still make use of them should they so wish. It should also be noted that I have changed the Rune slightly so that it is suitable for one person to say.

[17] Gardnerians generally start the process in the East and end at the North by moving in a Sun-wise direction.

[18] Not all Witches would agree with this though. Some see that North is the direction of Death, corresponding as it does to Capricorn and the Mid-Winter Solstice. I would argue though that the death of the Sun starts at the time of the Autumn Equinox, which corresponds to the West and that the Sun's *birth* comes at the Mid-Winter Solstice. Therefore, by starting the closing ceremony in the North, the whole of the Sun's life has been symbolically moved through from birth to death.

[19] There are several terms used to describe the putting out of candles in the lessons. At the end of the day, you should use a method that suits you, whether this be with a candle snuffer, wetted fingers, blowing or any other way. Some Witches will tell you that blowing out candles is disrespectful to the divine forces, although others have no problem with this.

[20] The *Gardnerian Book of Shadows* is available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/gbos/gbos26.htm>.

[21] The Charge of the Goddess first appeared in the *Gardnerian Book of Shadows* in 1957. None of the *Book of Shadows* is officially attributed to any author, although it is generally accepted that the Charge was written by Doreen Valiente.

[22] Please note that this has nothing to do with how you look, just because you are slim doesn't necessarily mean you are fit and just because you are large doesn't necessarily mean you are unhealthy. No-one should be encouraged into becoming hung up on their shape.

[23] Before any physical exercise is undertaken, you should always check with your physician.

[24] Similarly, check with your physician before undertaking dietary changes.

[25] It goes without saying that you should make sure though that in all these scenarios you only carry out the exercises when you are not in danger of injuring yourself.

Chapter Four: Magical Tools and Garb

Magical Tools and Garb

Merry Meet and Welcome to the Class!

On completing this lesson you will already be one third of the way through the course!

In this lesson you will learn about:

The Wiccan tools of the trade and clothing.

Continuing on, there is a research project for you to complete.

There are also further magical exercises for you to work on.

Finally, there is a blessing.

Tools of the Trade

In the last lesson you learnt about the ceremonial basics of Wicca, which included a section on how to set up an altar and referred at numerous points to a variety of Wiccan tools.

These instruments and their usage in Witchcraft probably derive from the *Clavicula Salomonis*. This fabled magical grimoire is best known in its English form, *The Key of Solomon The King*, which was translated from Latin by S.L. MacGregor Mathers, one of the key members of the original Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Whether or not King Solomon [1] actually wrote the work is highly debateable. The manuscripts that Mathers used probably originated no earlier than the mid-fifteenth century. The *Key* lists a variety of magical tools, as well as their markings and a number of relevant consecrations [2]. The work was hugely influential on Gerald Gardner, who adapted much of it when creating Wicca [3].

Strictly speaking, special ritual tools are not necessary for the practice of Wicca, for, as was noted last lesson, the divine energies are channelled and shaped through the individual, and not by his or her implements. However, there are very few Witches who do not have their own equipment. They feel that in some way

their tools enhance their experience of the Craft. Some say that the tools help them to focus on the work in hand, some will frankly tell you that they are beautiful objects that serve to enhance the aesthetics of Wicca, others feel a personal bond with these articles that helps produce better magical work, and so on. The period during which a prospective Witch makes or buys their own tools is when they feel they are becoming truly Wiccan. There is nothing wrong with this and in a sense the tools serve as one of the initiatory experiences of the Craft; it marks a stage when one is serious about the pursuit of the religion and shows a desire to conform to its general practices.

Whether the objects outlined below are acquired through inheritance, gift, shopping, barter or auction matters little. There is a tradition that price should not be haggled over, although this doesn't mean that shopping around isn't thought of as a good thing. Many would argue that it definitely pays to do this. Most occult supply shops (both On-line and in the real world) are honest traders, but you will find a great variance in price and quality. Be particularly circumspect when looking for a wand, I have seen small fortunes charged for "magically-blessed" sticks with a crystal super-glued onto the end. Remember too, that just because you paid top dollar, it won't make your tool any better than someone who got a bargain on eBay.

The Athame or Witches' Dagger



In many traditions this is the most important Wiccan tool, although some feel the wand is pre-eminent. It is considered to have masculine energy, for the obvious reason that it is a phallic symbol. This work teaches that the athame is essentially a weapon of Air through which fiery energy may be channelled as in the Opening of the Temple [4]. It is never used for cutting.

These days you will find Witches sporting athames of many different colours with the hilt made from bone, metal and even stone. Conventionally, though, this part of the athame is made from black wood, or painted that hue, as it is felt that black absorbs energy. Some are kept completely plain, others are inlaid or inscribed with beautiful magical symbols or have encrusted jewels. Decoration is a matter of personal choice, of course, but it is normally accepted that the hilt should be of a natural substance. This is because the athame is used to channel energy and natural materials are thought to do this better than human-made substances.

Generally the blade is made from steel. It is usually between six to ten inches long. I have heard different advice about whether or not it should be kept sharp. Some argue that there is no point in having a blunt knife and that a sharp blade channels energy more effectively. Others think of safety first and feel that having sharp knives being waved in the air is just asking for trouble, especially in a coven setting where people may be naked. They therefore blunt the blade with a file. I would argue that in a coven setting blunting is a good idea but for the solitary Witch the risks are much less.

As pointed out by the Farrars, it is also well to bear in mind that Witches do not go about their daily activities with their athames to hand [5]. They are used solely in the context of ritual work within a private setting. Of course, if you are travelling to a Wiccan ritual where you will be working with others you will need to transport it, but it makes sense that you keep it in a bag and not on your person. Knives are dangerous objects and best kept out of harm's way.

Many Wiccans decorate the blade with magical symbols which derive from the *Key of Solomon* [6] although it is often felt that this isn't strictly necessary.

The Wand

The wand has recently gained in popularity thanks to its prominence in a number of high profile works of fiction such as the Harry Potter stories and the *Lord of the Rings*. It is primarily a weapon of Fire [7]. As such it could be used for casting a circle and some Witches prefer to do this. In general, though, it is especially used for invocation, spell and healing work, when a concentration of energy is needed.

Traditionally a wand is made from wood. In the past it used to be thought that hazel or nut wood was best and, if the advice of the *Key of Solomon* was to be followed, then this should be of a year's growth and best harvested at dawn on a Wednesday [8]. There are few Wiccans who go to such lengths and today many different natural materials are used including copper, steel and crystal, as well as dowel rods from a DIY store.

These days wands are manufactured in all shapes and sizes, although tradition has it that the wand should be the same length as the distance between the crook of the owner's elbow and forefinger. However, this isn't totally necessary –it's not the size of your wand that counts....

Wands are fairly easy to make and need not be elaborate. On the next page is a photo of one made from a hazel branch carved with a Swiss army knife:



Embellishment is dictated by preference. On this example the symbol of the Wiccan First Degree is in evidence, along with a pentagram and a triple moon-phase symbol. Some add beading around the shaft, as well as crystal tips. A nice touch can be to make a drawstring bag. The one above was hand-sewn from a single piece of blue, thick-cotton velvet. A dark colour is best as the tools are usually only exposed to Sunlight if they are used for magical or ritual practices during the day.

The Chalice or Bowl

For hundreds of years, since the days of the Holy Grail, the Chalice has been a sacred symbol. For Witches it symbolises the Goddess, femininity and the Element of Water. Many Witches, if they can afford it, like to have a chalice made from silver, the metal of the Moon, but other common materials include pewter, glass and even earthenware (the latter being particularly evocative of the Earth Goddess). In the Opening of the Temple it is the container of the sacred water, which, when mixed with salt, marks out the circle. In other magical work it can be used as a place of containment for energies, or a place where energy is gestated before being born to the world.

The Pentacle

Perhaps the next most important piece of equipment is the pentacle, which is attributable to Earth. This is a piece of disk shaped material and can vary in size from a few inches in diameter, to a foot or more in width, depending on the size of the altar. It is usually made from wood, although they can be constructed from metal, stone or even wax. There used to be a story within the Craft that wax was used during the “burning times” of the Witch Inquisitions. If a Witch felt that danger was near the wax pentacle would be thrown on the kitchen fire and all trace of magical practice would quickly melt. This story is, of course, bogus. There is no historical evidence to suggest such objects existed during those times and neither is there any report of wax pentacles being thrown on fires.

Symbols drawn on the pentacles vary; some Witches simply have a large pentagram, whilst others opt for the variety of glyphs used by Gardnerian Witchcraft, as in the example below:



Starting from the left of the picture we have the symbol of the Horned God, notice that the horns are Moon-shaped, emphasising a connection with the Goddess. Above this is the upside down triangle of the First Degree, which is also the symbol for Water. At the top is the symbol of the Element Fire, which, when joined with the central pentagram, is the symbol of the Third Degree. To the right, the upside down pentagram of the Second Degree, showing the descent of Spirit into the individual, can be seen. Following this, there is the waxing and waning symbol of the Goddess. Below is the symbol for the scourge, one of the standard Gardnerian tools, although not used by all traditions. Finally, there is the symbol of the kiss, a standard Wiccan greeting and also a symbol of the mildness of deity.

These are the four main Wiccan tools, it should be borne in mind that they are representative of the Elements of Air, Fire, Water and Earth (and everything that they symbolise).

Other Important Wiccan Tools

The Cup

Many Witches also like to have a cup with wine (or ale) made out of silver or pewter. This is particularly the case with covens that use the ceremony of cakes and wine, and their cup is large enough to hold sufficient drink for everyone. In terms of symbolism it is very closely allied to the chalice or bowl.

The Censer

The censer provides a convenient place to burn incense during rituals. More than this, though, it is used to represent the element of Air when casting the circle. This piece of equipment varies as widely as the others and can be made from many materials. The only necessary requirements being that it is fireproof, easily carried round the ritual space and made from a natural substance. Some opt for censers similar to the swinging ones used by the Catholic Church, whilst others have a dish made from pottery or china. If you choose to have one made from pottery it can be a good idea to place sand or salt in the bottom of it as this will absorb the heat from the incense.

Different types of incense can be used depending on the work being carried out, and it is possible to find a whole range of correspondences in magical literature. Don't worry unduly about these for, at the end of the day, it's what seems right to you that matters. As noted last lesson, sandalwood and frankincense are something of a standard but there is no reason why you should not use other fragrances should you feel so inclined. Incense comes in a variety of forms such as sticks, cones or granules and, which ever you prefer, all are readily available from occult specialist shops, as well as many thrift stores.

The Dish of Salt

Salt is a material associated with Earth. In Alchemy it is a passive, negative uniting substance. When mixed with the water it is used to mark out the circle.

With all these items now assembled, the essential equipment to practice Wicca has been gathered. However, many Witches use further instruments and for the sake of completeness they are included below:

Cauldron

The cauldron, along with the broom, is perhaps the tool most widely associated with Witchcraft in the view of the general public. And yet it is perfectly possible to practice Wicca effectively without it. Usually it is three-legged with a handle that allows it to be hung over an open fire. Like the chalice it is a symbol of the Goddess and femininity in general. It is the place from which magic wells up and like a sacred spring can be considered a font of life.

The cauldron is often used in a variety of rites as a focal point. During a Wiccan wedding ceremony, known as a “Handfasting”, or during a Wiccan baptism, called a “Wiccaning”, it can be filled with a floral display to symbolise fresh beginnings, good fortune and plenty. Similarly, during ceremonies that celebrate the re-birth of the Sun’s light or spring, it can be used to show that new life has been brought forth. It is the womb of wombs, the belly of the Great Goddess.

The cauldron is more than just a ritual tool and there are many Wiccans who regularly use it for its originally intended purpose of cooking. In a sense, this can be seen to give this object added meaning and value, as quite literally it becomes a giver of the things needed to sustain life. Some Witches use it all the time for this purpose, whilst others just cook food in it for special occasions.

Traditionally it is made from iron and can be purchased from ironmongers, especially those in a rural setting. In a city they can be much more difficult to find. Using an ironmonger can be a cheaper option than buying the item from occult

suppliers, where it can sometimes seem as if a magic value added tax has been levied. Other popular choices of metal are copper and steel. Size varies widely; a solitary may have one just several inches across, whilst a coven may have one several feet in diameter. These really huge ones are often very effectively used during ceremonies of birth (of the Sun, babies, religious vows etc.), where an individual curls up inside ready to burst out into the world.

Another of its uses is as a divinatory tool. Filled to the brim with water, it becomes an instrument of scrying (the “cry” pronounced as “cry” and not “cree”), where the diviner gazes into the pool, and waits for images to appear that shed light on the subject in hand.

Broom

Few things are as evocative of the popular perception of Witchcraft, than the old hag riding over the trees on her broom on a moonlit night. There are several explanations of the meaning of this image, ranging from it being a simplistic explanation of Astral Projection, where flying is the metaphor, to an allegory of sex, where the female Witch rides the male broom. Rather interestingly, in this connection, the Italian verb *scopare* means to sweep, but has the impolite double meaning of “to have sex”.

In days of yore the broom was supposed to be a tool of protection, as when it was laid across a doorway no malignant spirits were supposed to be able to enter.

These days, perhaps first and foremost it is a cleaning tool. Some Witches have a special broom with which to sweep clean a courtyard where the coven practice, or use it to sweep leaves from the garden when a ritual is outdoors. It can also be used as a way of psychically purifying an area where a cleansing spell is cast and used to sweep away any unwanted psychical energies.

As an obvious phallic symbol it is sometimes used during Handfastings, where the couple jump over the broom to help ensure a fertile union. It can also be used in a similar sense during rituals that bless crops to guarantee a successful and bountiful harvest.

Here, in rural Northern Italy (*Wicca Revealed* was written in Italy), a round-headed broom is a common household item and there are many stores that sell them. For those who find them harder to come by, it is a fairly easy object to make. A shaft can be fashioned from ash or bamboo, birch twigs are best for the head and both can be bound together with a willow binding.

Crystal Ball

Not all Witches possess a crystal ball but it is another tool strongly identified with magical practice. Real quartz crystal balls are expensive items; a small one can cost £20 while one of a large diameter may cost thousands. Clear crystal balls are extremely rare and prized above all others, for crystal is a natural substance and often full of “flaws” or occlusions. Modern substitutes are glass, black obsidian, and even plastic. The latter items are easily found in occult supply shops or even on eBay. Beware, though, that advertisers often refer to their balls as being genuine crystal, when they, in fact, more accurately mean crystal glass.

In ceremonies these objects are easily understood as symbols of the Moon and the Goddess, where its ovoid shape echoes the curves of the divine feminine and its all-encompassing nature. Most familiarly, a crystal ball is used as a tool for scrying, but it can be used just as effectively as an instrument for storing psychic energy. Most Witches believe that it should never be exposed to direct sunlight and should be kept wrapped up in a dark natural cloth (such as velvet or silk) in a pouch or a box. Periodically, it should be bathed in the light of the Full Moon to help recharge its psychical properties.

The Boline

As you have learnt, Wiccans never cut anything with their athames. Therefore, another knife is needed to cut objects that may be used during ritual or magical work. Some Witches simply use a knife from the kitchen, which they have consecrated before hand, and others have a special white handled knife, or bolline (also spelt “boline”). It is used to cut flowers, herbs, candles and cords, as well as carve magical inscriptions into wood, wax, stone, resin etc. Some see that it should

be used solely within a magic circle, others that it can be used wherever needed, but always within a Wiccan context.

Cords

Witches often have a set of three cords. These are nine feet long. If wound round with thread at the ends to prevent fraying, the measurement is from end to end -if knotted, the measurement is from knot to knot. These can be of varied colour; although some traditions or covens lay down rules regarding which colours are acceptable [9]. Popular combinations are silver, gold and black, symbolising the Moon, the Sun and the Earth; or green, blue and silver to represent the Earth, the sky and the Moon. Covens often use the cords during initiatory rites where an individual is lightly bound as part of the ceremony. More generally, they can be used for a variety of work when binding is needed as well as in cord magic. As they are nine feet long they can also be used to make the traditionally sized coven circle.

Scourge

Perhaps one of the more controversial Wiccan tools is the scourge and many books avoid all mention of the subject altogether, presumably for fear of the charge that it is somehow a “kinky” object. Often the handle is made from black leather or wood and the fronds from fine leather strips, or cord. For centuries many religious groups have practiced ritual flagellation. This is done as it is supposed to have the effect of stimulating blood flow and energy in an attempt to heighten mystical experience. **Modern Wiccans do not use the scourge to the point of self-harm, and anyone who did so in the name of Wicca would be deeply frowned upon or considered as needing help.**

Today it is primarily a symbol of the severity of the Goddess. Just as we owe our existence to her, she is just as capable of taking our lives away with a seeming callousness that is difficult to comprehend. We are, on the Physical Plane at least, mortal and easily destroyed by the whims of Mother Nature –it is as well to remind ourselves of this fact, particularly in our technological world where we often feel beyond her reach and immune to her touch.

The scourge is also an object that can be used to gently stimulate blood flow during magical work to help raise the energy needed for a particular result, and is most commonly used on the back.

Consecration

Having assembled all the tools, they must then be properly cleansed and consecrated before they are used for magical work. This is a common practice in most religions where a priest or specially ordained individual is given the job. Wicca differs in that all Witches are priest/esses who consecrate their own tools in their own right. Solitaries will, of course, do this by themselves, but in covens it is common practice for a female and male to perform the act together. This is because the religion of Wicca lays so much importance on gender polarity.

The significance of consecration is psychological and magical. By making the tools holy, Witches are marking them out as important. This has the effect of making the user feel differently about them, which increases confidence in their ability to be used effectively for ritual and magical practice. Further, most Witches subscribe to the idea that all things exist on different levels. Our common, everyday, physical reality is but one of many. There are layers of existence from which all things are made, above and beyond the realm of the material. Therefore, it is seen that the tools also are made from many planes of energy. As you will learn in a later lesson some of these levels are particularly susceptible to any emotional or energetic charge that they get in the Physical Realm.

The act of consecration gives a similar energy to ritual tools which resonates on other levels. This is important, as effective magical work is usually about the direction of will, or intention, on more than just the Material Plane.

The following consecration rituals, written with solitary practice in mind, have been adapted from *The Key of Solomon* [10]. Both should be performed within a properly constructed magical circle as written of last lesson. This means that the salt and the water used in these rituals will already have been consecrated and ready to use on the tools.

Consecration Ritual for an Athame

Place the athame on the pentacle. Sprinkle it with the consecrated saltwater mixture in the chalice. Next pick the athame up and sweep it through the incense fumes. Put the athame back on the pentacle. Say:

“I conjure thee, O Athame, by the Divine name of Yod, He, Vav, He [11], that thou serve me for strength and defence in all Magical Operations, against all mine Enemies, visible and invisible. I conjure thee anew by the Holy Names of the Goddess and God (substitute here the Goddess and God you have chosen to work with). Together thou art the First and the Last, the Way, Wisdom, Life and Truth, Speech, Word, Splendour, the Light of the Moon and the Sun, the Fountain, the Glory, the Stone of the Wise, Virtue and Immortal. By these names then, I conjure thee, O Athame, that thou servest me for protection in all adversities. So mote it be.”

The athame, now freshly consecrated, should be placed in its proper storage place (bag or sheath) unless it is intended to be used later in the circle.

Consecration for All Other Tools

Put the item to be consecrated on the pentacle. Sprinkle it with the consecrated saltwater. Next pick the object up and sweep it through the incense fumes. Put it back on the pentacle. Intone:

“Divine Goddess and God, all powerful and all merciful, bless this tool so that it may be for the greater glory of your Holy Names and work for the good of its rightful owner. So mote it be.”

Sprinkle it again with saltwater and sweep it through the incense fumes one last time.

The tool should now be placed in its proper storage.

Bonding, Charging and Storage

Some Witches like to form a closer bond with their tools and achieve this by placing them under their pillow when they go to sleep. Obviously not all are done at once, as this would hardly guarantee a good night's rest. Those that bond with their implements in this way state that it is most useful for divinatory tools, such as a crystal ball or a pack of Tarot cards.

Periodically tools may be in need of psychically charging. It is believed that leaving them in a place where they can be bathed in Moonlight at the full or waxing Moon is an effective way to give them the energy that they need. If this method is chosen make sure that the tools are collected up before dawn.

Many Witches have their own special tips about the correct storage of tools.

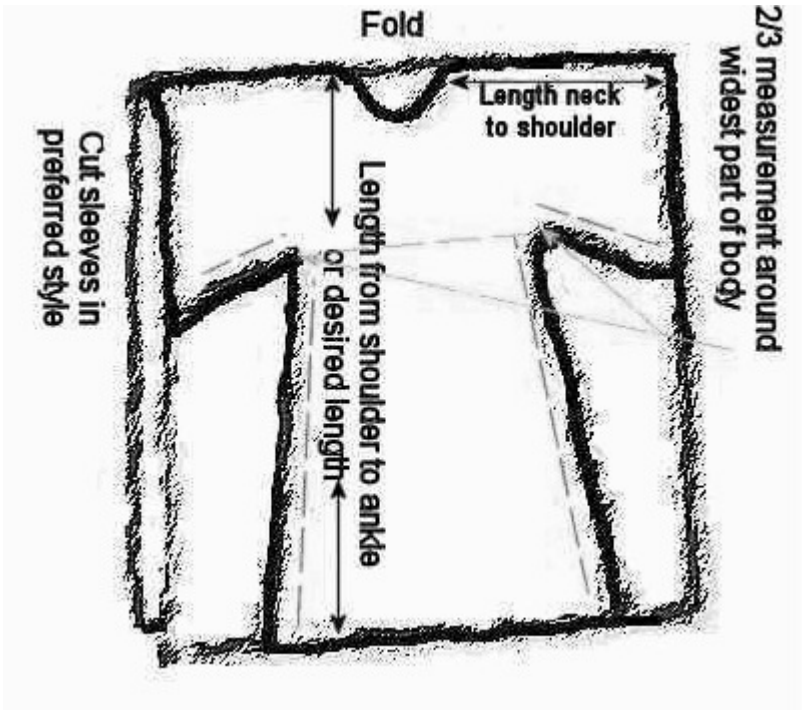
Perhaps the first consideration is whether they need to be kept under lock and key. If there is a toddler in the house obviously objects such as an athame should be kept out of harm's way. Privacy may also be an issue when sharing accommodation with non-Wiccans. Some like to keep all or some of their tools out of the Sun (this is particularly true of crystal balls) and store them in a box, pouch or silk cloth. This is done because it is believed that the power of the tool will dissipate if it has prolonged exposure to daylight.

Garb

Once a prospective new Witch has gathered their tools, attention is often next turned towards ritual clothing. Many Witches prefer to work skyclad or naked, although for practical reasons, or for fear of causing a scandal in the neighbourhood, there are many times when ceremonies and magic are performed clothed. The main requirements of any clothing are that it be of natural fibres and loose fitting. This is so that energies can move unhindered and ritual movements performed easily. There is no practical reason why a cotton tracksuit couldn't be used, although most self-respecting Wiccans would not be seen dead practicing magic in one.

Many Witches opt for a simple robe tied at the waist, made of cotton and in a natural colour such as brown, yellow, green or blue. Others will go for heavy black velvet capes over splendidly embroidered robes of emerald and gold. Some would argue that the robes do not make the Witch, although there is a school of thought, within magical circles, that fine costume helps to heighten the overall experience of the religion and give it an air of gravity and importance, in much the same way that gowns and wigs are employed in the British judicial system [12]. Whether this is regarded as effective is a matter of personal taste, although it cannot be denied it is very distinctive. Some traditions seek to give their Witches an overall look and use ritual clothing to mark out rank in a similar way to the Catholic Church, with different colour gowns for the Degrees and the wearing of particular symbols on their stoles. Others, conversely, are more eclectic.

A simple robe is fairly easily made and can be quickly produced even by hand. The diagram on the next page indicates the general shape to be cut from the fabric:



1. Fold the fabric in half so that the folded fabric is as long as you want your robe to be.
2. Cut a half circle in the middle of the fold through both layers. This will become the head hole. Make the hole about the size of your head, taking care not to make it too big. Cut a short slit along the front of the hole, about ten centimeters (four inches) on one side only.
3. Measure all the way around the largest part of your body. Two thirds of this measurement will tell you how wide the distance across the chest should be from armpit to armpit. For example, if your chest is one hundred centimetres (roughly thirty-nine inches) then the space between the arm pits should be sixty-six centimetres (or thirty-three inches). See the grey arrows and dotted lines on the diagram.
4. The arm holes should be very loose, so cut the arm pits a good way down from the top. This is very important, otherwise you won't get your robe on.
5. Now cut out the side triangles (the area beneath the sleeves) through both layers.
6. Sew up the sides along the dotted lines in red and turn the robe inside out.
7. Finish the edges by turning them under and sewing them.

Your simple robe is now complete. A thick cord around the waist can also be added.

There are many further patterns that can be easily found on the Internet. Alternatively, robes and capes can be bought from specialist shops.

Research Project

This month's research project is more a chance to gather together your magical tools and clothing if you haven't already got them. Remember that although the tools don't make the Witch, they are, nonetheless, symbolic of a burgeoning commitment to the Craft.

Check out some magical supply stores, both in the real and On-line world, and compare prices and what's on offer.

Wicca is a creative and resourceful religion and some of you may wish to have a go at making some of the tools or garb. Why not share your methods with others and give them the chance to learn your skills again by posting on the Magicka School Forum? How will you decorate your athame, for instance? What did you use to make a wand and how did you go about it? Have you made a design for a robe that can be shared?

Will you follow the suggested consecration ceremony in the chapter, or will you adapt it?

By the end of the month try to have all the things you will need to practice Wicca together.

Exercises

Last month there were a whole series of training given to aid the ability to concentrate and focus the will. What worked? What did you find easy? What was hard? Did you notice a shift in how you perceive the world? There were also suggestions about changes in diet and exercise that will have a beneficial effect on the practice of magic. Take a few moments to review these things. How successful were you with the four daily awareness exercises? What did you change in your diet? How did you find the physical exercise? Be honest with yourself, if you achieved everything then that is obviously wonderful. If you struggled, think now about some ways that you can re-focus and write down what you are prepared to commit to over the coming month in your Book of Shadows or Book of Mirrors.

This month we will continue with new exercises in preparation for working magic.

The Candle

The following exercise is a first step at projecting your consciousness. Being able to do this effectively will eventually greatly expand the range of your magical influence, both on the Physical and Non-Physical Planes.

Light a plain wax candle.

Sit facing it several feet away. You don't want to be too close.

Ground and centre. This will balance your energies and calm you for the work in hand.

Gaze at the candle. Look at its length, its colour, its bumps and ridges, any drips of wax. Turn your attention towards the wick, the liquid wax at the top and the flame. Watch how it flickers and dances, the light and shadow that it casts around the room, the way that everything around you is bathed in its light and moves to its tune. Spend a few moments contemplating these things.

Next you are going to imagine that you are at one with this object, that in a sense you are inside of it and feeling what it feels.

Concentrate on the body of the candle and project your consciousness inside of it, imagine that you see the room from its perspective. You can see yourself gazing on, the furniture around the room, the light on the walls.

Next concentrate on the flame –imagine that you are at one with it, feel yourself flicker and glow, admire the patterns that you create as you move.

After a few moments doing this, come to normal consciousness and record your thoughts and impressions in your Book of Shadows.

The Light Within

Fostering light within yourself is an important technique to master. It will not only give you a greater sense of well-being and calmness but, perhaps most importantly, will help to increase your levels of energy, which, as has been mentioned in several places already, is crucial to the successful practice of magic.

Breathe in for seven, hold for four and breathe out for seven. Repeat this cycle a few times.

Concentrate on the region of your solar plexus. Look into yourself and imagine that in this region of your body there is a dark cave. The cave has a positive and welcoming feeling to it, but it is shady and you cannot see clearly. Imagine that you are standing in this cave and that you light a large thick altar candle that instantly throws light upon the walls. Put the candle carefully down on the floor and examine what you can see. What do you find in your cave? Spend a few moments exploring. When you have finished, leave the candle burning and walk outside.

Come to normal consciousness and record what you saw in your Book of Shadows.

Do this exercise several times over the month. Each time, take another candle until your cave is shimmering and glowing with the most wonderful and warm light. When you have reached this stage, you can then begin to project this light and warmth round your body to your vital organs by imagining that the light seeps through the cave walls and travels through your arteries to wherever you visualise.

As well as being good for the practice of magic, you will also likely notice that over time this technique has a powerful positive effect on your health. You will feel good and your skin will be healthier looking and more glowy. If this sounds far fetched then give it a go for a couple of months, you will begin to see and feel the difference.

Projecting Consciousness

“The Candle” and “The Light Within” are preliminary to this exercise, so only begin to practice projecting energy from the second week of the month’s study. You will also need to make sure that by this stage you have obtained a wand that you have consecrated correctly.

Perform the following exercise in a properly cast circle. This should pose no problem having learnt to do this last month.

Take your wand in both hands and focus on what it looks and feels like. Examine its length, the material from which it is made, any markings that are upon it. Look closely at it and in detail. Is it heavy or light? How does it feel in one hand, or the other? What about when it is lifted up skyward or thrust outwards?

After you have spent a few moments doing this, project your consciousness into the wand in the same kind of way that you practiced during the candle exercise. You will know when you have correctly achieved this, as you will find yourself looking up out of your hands at yourself. This may be quite shocking, so expect a bit of a jolt to the system. If you cannot reach this stage, do not worry or assume that you are doing something wrong. It can take many attempts. Gently try a couple of more times (no more than a couple though, and don’t strain). If the

effect hasn't been reached, wind-up the circle appropriately and write down your experiences. It is very important that you write about what happened in a positive way. If you couldn't project, then first of all concentrate on how the wand looked and felt in as much detail as possible. Next, write down what you did to attempt to project, what senses were involved, what you felt like inside, whether there were any distractions, and so on. Most importantly, make sure you use these notes to refine your approach next time. Try the exercise again another day and recognise that it may be several weeks or months before you can do this satisfactorily.

When you succeed, learn to feel comfortable within the wand and experiment with concentrating your energy at the tip by imagining it has turned bright ultra violet. This again may take many attempts. After each attempt, record what you did and the results you achieved.

You can also do this exercise with your athame.

End Blessing

Now that you have begun to collect your tools together you are on the Wiccan path in earnest. It is important that you allow yourself some credit for this. You are really reaching a stage where you are making a genuine commitment to the Goddess and the God.

Please make sure that you carry out the exercises in the order that they were intended to be practiced.

May the Divine Light of the Goddess and the God bless your tools and the work that you carry out with them.

Blessed Be,

In Love and Light,

See you next lesson!

Notes

[1] King Solomon (c.970 BCE-c.930 BCE) was a legendary monarch of Ancient Israel.

[2] See S.L. MacGregor Mathers trans., *The Key of Solomon the King, (Clavicula Salomonis)*, Weiser, 1990, pp. 96-97.

[3] This is evidenced by Gardner's *Book of Shadows*. On Gardner's construction of consecrations see Janet and Stewart Farrar, *A Witches Bible*, Phoenix Publishing Inc., 1996, pp. 41-7 and on tool markings pp. 253-255.

[4] Which Elemental properties the athame embodies is open to question. For example, the Farrars argue that it is attributed to Fire while Doreen Valiente feels that it is attributable to Air. This book concurs with Air, as the athame's attribution derives from the Golden Dawn documents concerning the so-called "Elemental weapons" (despite what some historians claim, this is the true Golden Dawn attribution and not a "blind" to put off the uninitiated). Given that the athame represents Air, I teach that the wand represents Fire. However, at the end of the day, individual Witches must decide for themselves what feels right.

[5] Janet and Stewart Farrar, op. cit., p. 256.

[6] See Mathers, op. cit., p.97. For an explanation of the symbols see the Farrars, op. cit. pp. 253-55. They make use of correspondence with Doreen Valiente to explain the markings.

[7] Note that in the Tarot, that great compendium of magical knowledge, Wands represent Fire. Many Witches, however, believe the wand should be attributable to Air.

[8] See Mathers, op. cit., p.97.

[9] Many Gardnerians and Alexandrians use red, white and blue. See for example, *A Witches Bible, II, Principles, Rituals and Beliefs*, p.15.

[10] This was the work Gerald Gardner also used when designing his consecration rituals. See S.L. MacGregor Mathers, op.cit., p.97 and 102.

[11] This four Hebrew letters make up the Holy name of Jehovah, or the Holy Tetragrammaton. Jehovah should not be seen as the masculine God of the Jews or Christians but more as a spiritual entity of which the Goddess and the God are aspects. Yod, He, Vav and He also symbolise the Elemental forces of Fire, Water, Air and Earth of which all things are composed.

[12] See, for example, Richard Cavendish's comments on the second page of the foreword to the 1990 Weiser edition of *The Key of Solomon the King*, where he states that robes (along with other magical paraphernalia) serve to aid the concentration and summoning up of inner resources within the magician.

Chapter Five: The Art of Magic

The Art of Magic

Merry Meet and Welcome to the Class!

At the end of this lesson you will be very nearly half way through your studies!

It's excellent that you have come so far. Keep it up!

In this lesson you will learn about:

The basics of magic.

Continuing on, there is a research project for you to complete.

There are also magical exercises for you to work on.

Finally, there is a blessing.

The Art of Magic

Magic [1] can be at the very heart of what it means to be a Witch, although it is generally viewed as being of secondary importance to the worship of the Goddess and God.

Magical practices have existed in all cultures and at all times and continue to have a permanent presence and influence in human society. In this sense they are comparable to Astrology and religion. At various times in history it has been the subject of persecution and the victim of frequent misrepresentation, most familiarly, of course, as a science of evil. Like many areas of human knowledge and expertise it is an evolving art with diverse strands. It can be a complicated and overwhelming subject for the beginner. It is not a religion, although it can have goals that are in line with religious aspirations.

One of the most famous definitions of magic was given by Aleister Crowley who wrote that it could be considered as, “The science and art of causing changes to occur in conformity with will”[2].

Magic relies on the active participation of the individual in all its processes. It is not something for those who wish to passively listen and observe. To succeed in

magic's ends, the Witch or magician has to learn to control themselves and their surroundings. There is a wide range of magical techniques that must be mastered to create the desired results.

Magic can be divided into High and Low Magic and Wicca combines aspects of both.

At root, High Magic is a series of disciplines that aim to provide the practitioner with the means of realising their spirituality to its full extent, the ultimate aspiration of which is to effect Union with the Divine. Its practices are generally based on a range of ancient frameworks such as Astrology, Alchemy and, most especially, the Kabbalah. Once a reasonable level of skill in these things has been acquired the practitioner is then in a position to enlist the help of their Holy Guardian Angel or Spirit guide in approaching the heavenly. Much of this relies on a great deal of knowledge acquired over time as well as a disciplined regimen of magical exercises. This is not for everyone, as it requires the devotion of a relatively large section of one's life to its practice.

Low Magic differs from High Magic in a variety of ways. The most important of these is that although Low Magic's aim is the control of oneself and one's surroundings, it does not generally have the ultimate end goal of absorption into the divine. Low Magic is generally based on folklore and its techniques. Its practices involve such things as herbal remedies, spells to cure ailments or achieve desires, and ceremonial offerings that give thanks to the goddesses and gods. It should not be construed that the term "low" implies that such magic is ineffective, or that it does not have a real importance.

What every beginner wants to know is "does magic work?" And, of course, the answer to this must be a resounding yes, although with some notable qualifications.

Sometimes newcomers have unrealistic expectations and will attempt to rely on magic to find their way through life and, perhaps as a result of this, there can be a lot of debate amongst Witches about how frequently magic should be practiced;

especially the use of spells. One of the ways I like to explain its use is to say that magic is often at its most effective when it is part of a strategy to achieve something. For example, just using magical techniques in a bid to make you healthier, wealthier, bigger, better or closer to deity will rarely work, if ever. Yet, it can be a most effective part of a programme of achievement. A useful analogy is to think of an athlete. The most successful runners, for example, will tell you that their success isn't just down to a talent at running. They have a special diet, they train their mind as much as their body, they goal-focus, have the right shoes and clothes, make sure they rest correctly and so on. Their success is based on a range of things. It's the same with goals that Witches have; magic is frequently used as part of an overall strategy to achieve them. Incidentally, you can certainly use this art to help you run faster when you use it as part of an holistic programme.

Magic will not turn toads into princes or stones into gold, despite what many stories will lead you to believe. Magic works with nature and according to its laws. This is a very important point to grasp and is often completely missed by the beginner and "expert" alike. Don't let this put you off though, if we think of Crowley's definition above, about causing "change to happen in conformity with will", you will realise that the human Spirit and mind are capable of achieving many seemingly impossible things, when will is focussed.

A Warning

In this course you will only ever come across techniques that are tried, tested and safe. However, magic is a serious subject and should be treated with respect. It is not for dabblers who experiment with advanced topics that they know little about. Think of it like a box of matches. Obviously, when misused, these objects can cause harm, yet, when used wisely, they provide the means of warmth and the ability to cook. Magic is the same, use it wisely and it will be your friend and help you achieve many things, use it badly and it has the potential to hurt you and others around you. This is one of the reasons that Wiccan training isn't generally offered to the very young as a certain level of maturity is needed.

Many Wiccans (although not all) believe in the law of threefold return. That is, if you wish harm on others you can expect it to return to you with three times the force. On the other hand, use magic for the benefit of others and you will find the whole quality of your life is enhanced.

Some Basics

The energy to practice magic comes from three sources:

- The Earth
- Ourselves
- The Goddess and God

Throughout the lesson the above should be borne in mind as Witches consciously use all three towards their ends. The power of the Earth comes from its own inner energy that lives in the trees, plants, wind, seas, crystals and scents. Each has its own distinct energy and can be drawn upon for specific work and is one of the reasons why herbs and crystals are often associated with magic. More than this, the Earth also exudes a kind of life force that some describe using the Hindu word *prana*. Pranic energy is often visualised as shining golden light that can be literally breathed in to invigorate both the body and soul, and to aid the goals of magic.

Within ourselves we have an inner vitality that we get from breath, exercise of all kinds (including sex), food, water, the Moon and the Sun.

Finally, there is the power of the Goddess and the God, which is in reality the power behind all things.

Energy is in a constant state of flux; nothing is ever static and everything is changing. We are part of a great cosmic dance that goes on around and within us. Everything that we think and do constantly affects our environment. On one level this is so obvious that we barely stop to think about it. We speak, move and touch, and something happens in response. Yet at heart this is magical and is something that is often not recognised or understood as such. We are all able to work magic in the sense of willing a thing to happen, taking action and achieving it; you can

probably think of a number of instances when this has happened to you. But the challenge is to enjoy dependable achievements in magical workings.

Necessary Skills and Considerations

Consistent success or failure in magic very much depends on how seriously it is practiced and whether or not the individual has spent the necessary time to build up the skills.

Concentration

For reasons which will become apparent in this lesson, it is absolutely crucial to accomplish at least the ability to concentrate for one minute on a single thing without the mind wandering. After having carried out the suggested exercises towards the end of each lesson for some time now, many will have achieved this. If you have not yet managed, do not feel a failure. If you can do five seconds, you can do ten, and after ten is reached it's quite possible to get to a minute. Once this stage has been achieved one's attention should be turned to the art of imagination.

Use of Imagination and Deciding on an Aspiration

Many things start with a dream, a wish or a desire - an aspiration for things to be something other than what they are in the present moment. Without such imaginative thoughts there is no success in life. Notice how the words imagination and magic share the letters “magi”. Quite literally there is *magic* in *imagination*. What you are about to learn will have the most amazing effects, if you follow the lesson closely.

The first thing to do is to decide what you really want. Does this sound easy? On one level, yes, anyone can make a list of wishes. But here is the hard part, what do you really want? As an example, let us suppose you desire to be financially rich. Many would say “Who wouldn’t want this?” But here is the difficulty; the question of *why* you want this. Some people might say they want to be wealthy so that they can live a life of luxury, to have a beautiful house, to drive fast cars and to see the world, and why not? There is nothing right or wrong with this as such. But look a little more closely, is that really what you want, deep down? Many of us

would probably still say yes, but here there will be some conflicts of feeling. Might having all that money mean friends will feel differently towards you? Can you handle such a huge change in lifestyle? Can you control yourself once you have all the buying power that great wealth brings? Will it make you a better person? Won't you feel a little guilty having all that money whilst the vast majority of people on our planet live in poverty?

These kinds of conflicts of feelings (whether they be over things that are big or small) are the main reason why it is difficult to decide what you really want. And where there is this conflict magic cannot work because the intention becomes less focused. The fact is, there are many things that we think we desire, but when we examine them in detail we find that we feel less sure, we are no longer totally convinced and when uncertainty creeps in it is difficult to make truly effective magic. You may have some success but you won't get the full result you wanted. You must know what it is you want and want it with all your heart. Your whole body must vibrate with its certainty. When this is achieved you have begun to align yourself with your Higher Self or True Will.

The Issue of Purity

Another of the most powerful things you can do to work effective magic is to make sure your intentions are pure. This is very important for a number of reasons. When intentions are wholesome it is easier to be convinced of them and to concentrate fully. Also like attracts like; if you work magic around good things then over time this will be reflected in your life. Do not be tempted to wish harm on others; you will only end up hurting yourself.

And, while we're on this subject, it's also worth noting that most spells and other magical work should generally only be carried out for another person with their consent and knowledge [3]. To act otherwise is to take away control of their life and many Wiccans are rightly very strict on this point.

Different Ways to Make Magic

Traditionally there are several ways to make magic [4]. These include:

- Meditation and concentration
- Spells, chants
- Dancing
- Astral Projection or trance
- Use of incense to aid the release of the Spirit

We will now consider each in turn:

Meditation and Concentration

Meditation and concentration are important skills in their own right and have a significant cross-over with spell casting.

Set your wishes, goals or intentions very carefully and choose things that you can be really convinced about. They must be things that you can focus on with no doubts in your mind. Make sure that you write these down in a journal or your Book of Shadows.

Next, once a direction has been decided upon, the intention or will for something to happen must be released effectively into the environment. An efficient way to do this is to let it go when all is calm and still. In that space, that area of nothingness, lays the divine, the state of non-being from which all things arose, it is a direct connection to the God/dess and the Higher Self. Put in terms of psychology, the intention is freed into the subconscious.

Cultivating calmness has some great effects. You may have noticed that when you are serene in life the events around you are similarly tranquil, but when you are full of turmoil, the outside world appears to be the same. It could be argued that external factors are causing this within you and, indeed, this seems apparently to be the case. But it is just an appearance. The truth of the matter is that when you are calm and collected the world has a tendency to appear so as well.

Interestingly, in relation to this, Buddhists have a saying that life is a mirror; it merely reflects your state of mind.

This is crucial to realise, because for an intention to be released effectively it needs a perfectly still environment. Think of the intention as a little wooden toy ship, and your mind and environment as a pool of water. When the water is still the ship can be clearly seen, and with one small push glides over the surface and quickly gets to its destination. Imagine now that the water is raging and crashing wildly in a storm. The ship is hard to see and no amount of pushing will ever get it to the other shore. In fact, it is most likely to sink.

Meditation provides one way of creating this calm space, this connection to the divine. When meditating to make magic, concentrate solely on visualising the successful outcome of the intention, and nothing more, for a brief period. Then just let it go, let it slip quietly into the space, into the unconscious. Within time it will weave its magic. It will work on your mind and your actions, influencing your environment in accordance with your will.

Spells

When one thinks of a Witch or a magician it is usually spell casting that they are most associated with. As has been written a number of times in these lessons, the most effective spells are the ones that an individual has made for themselves (or at least adapted for themselves). Buying prepared spell books can be a waste of money (although, to be fair, some Witches swear by them). They are written by someone else, coloured by their issues and thoughts and are frankly much less effective than if they had been written by the Witch or magician who was to use them.

Spell casting starts with an intention or will for something to happen that is strongly visualised.

This desire is then stated using words of power. These are phrases that a Witch has made, based on magical knowledge of what might be appropriate for the desired effect. Elements of Kabbalah, Astrology, goddess and god names,

alchemical terms and so on, may be added to the mix. As a general rule these should never be randomly chosen selections but words that have been specifically selected for their correspondences and the belief in their efficacy.

The words serve to stimulate and excite the mind of the Witch and also to focus on certain factors of importance to the spell. This has the effect of strengthening the visualisation of the outcome in as much detail as possible. When the time is judged to be right, when the mind is stimulated and the vision clear, the energy raised can then be directed through the spell and any movements of the body, to its intended target.

The work is then blessed and sealed.

Blessing something or someone is one of the most powerful things you can ever do in life. In terms of spell work, it affirms the spell and has the effect of making the practitioner feel good. Because life is a mirror, when you feel good the world around you feels good too; it is infectious and will bring many wonderful things. This may sound trite and it is, of course, a generalisation, but it is no surprise that those who work on creating positivity usually have a positive experience of life, and that this affects those around them in a profound way.

Sealing provides an endpoint and is important for a feeling that the spell has been done.

This cycle of setting an intention, using words of power, visualisation, release, blessing and sealing is very important and should be followed religiously.

Chants

The body, mind and spirit all respond to rhythm in an intense way. One of the easiest ways to create rhythm is through the voice. Since time began, humankind has used vocal techniques in religious and spiritual practices. A word, phrase, or whole verses, can be repeated over and over, often for considerable lengths of time.

There are two ways that chanting can be made to work and both will have similar end results, although both are quite distinct.

Method One

Chanting can be controlled so that it has the effect of relaxing the body; the mind then becomes stilled as it is only focussed on one thing. When this point is reached it is possible to connect to Spirit and release an intention into this space. This kind of chanting is at its most powerful when the words relate to the work being carried out and, again, the most successful Witches will often use specifically chosen words of power that they have made into a phrase or verse that is powerfully rhythmic. This is an important point and is often missed –any old line will not really do. Often random goddess or god names are aimlessly chanted for hours on end and it is then hardly surprising that the results are poor [5]. This takes some research or thought, but it is time well spent. Finding the right words will make all the difference with this method.

Method Two

Chanting can also be carried out so as to inflame the mind and set free the Spirit.

Confusing as it may be to the beginner, the same effect of calm space can also be produced by excitement of varying methods and levels. Witches make wide use of dancing and chanting to this very end. By raising personal power, excitement reaches a high point and it becomes possible to forget oneself and one's everyday worries and concerns. Although the mind is stimulated, sometimes to the point of frenzy or trance, there is nonetheless a kind of stillness and space created into which an intention can be cast. A useful analogy is that of a hurricane. All is wound round, frenetically spinning, but in the eye it is calm and still and there is clarity of far reaching vision upwards to Spirit.

This method begins slowly at first, until it builds and builds often to the point of frenzy and meaningless shrieking. Here the words uttered are not so important, although often strange sounding names are used from the Kabbalah or ancient grimoires [6] as they serve to stimulate the brain. Built up to fever pitch, the mind forgets itself -the intention, as well as the often considerable amounts of energy raised, can then be released into this void.

It is a good idea to experiment with both methods and see which you feel most comfortable with and judge to be effective.

Dancing

Dancing is frequently used by Wiccans to aid magical work, and can easily be joined with the technique of chanting, especially method two. The process is much the same in that the body, mind and Spirit are again responding to rhythm. Perhaps rather oddly, even dancing that reaches fever pitch has the effect of relaxing the body and mind. The body enjoys the rhythmic movements and the mind again loses its day to day worries and cares. Dancing also raises copious amounts of energy, which, along with the will for something to happen, can be set free into that calm space where they will most quickly travel to their desired end.

One of the most used magical techniques when dancing is the raising of a cone of power. In particular, this is commonly used among covens but can also be done by a solitary Witch, although usually with lesser results. The dancers spin and turn around the circle's edge, chanting more and more wildly and moving more and more ecstatically. This spinning motion creates a vortex of energy which spins ever faster and tighter within the circle confines. There is no way for it to go other than up and the force spirals towards the sky, upwards into the heavens, headed for its intended destination. This can be a particularly powerful technique when a far reaching, broad effect is required [7].

Astral Projection or Trance

Later in this course there is a lesson on the Levels of Being that deals quite extensively with the subject of Astral Projection. Put simply, humans are composed of different levels. One of these levels is the Astral Body. On the Astral Plane things are much more connected than on the Physical. It is possible to directly communicate over large distances with other people and it is easier for an intention to have an effect through astral energy. In a way, the methods already outlined, of creating a space into which to cast an intention, are doors into the Astral World. Meditation, chanting, trance and even dancing can all be a way in to

other planes of existence, as the mind is made to forget itself and its physical boundaries.

However, true Astral Projection is more than just this where the practitioner gets the genuine sense of an out of body experience, and is able to practice magic free from the physical form.

This kind of work is advanced and often takes years of practice to perfect. Although it is written of later in *Wicca Revealed*, the course does not give the full method, and those that want to can find out more in the *Wicca Advanced* book and course at www.magickaschool.com.

Incense

Incense is an expression of the energies of the Earth that has profound effects on the human mind. It is well known that smell is easily stored in long term memory and has strong connections to our emotions. An odour not smelt for many years will often instantly trigger distant memories often far back into childhood. It has a profound effect on the mind and its workings and, because of this, Witches seek to use it as a way-in to working magic, which, as you have seen throughout the lesson, is very much based on mind control. It is said that smell provides a direct route to our higher minds.

Which type of incense is used can depend on the person. For example some find vanilla to be calming and sedative, whilst others can find it overpowering and sickly sweet.

However, it is possible to make some generalisations about fragrances as they have been used for thousands of years and most people can, therefore, be expected to react in certain well-defined ways.

The table on the next page [8] gives an indication of some common fragrances and their effects.

Fragrance	Effect
Frankincense	Pungent and good for concentration
Sandalwood	Calming and mystical, beneficial on memory, gives strength to the emotions, increases confidence and sexual energy
Sage	Calming and cleansing
Peppermint	Stimulative, good for clarity of mind
Ylang Ylang	Aphrodisiac and stimulative. Good for love spells and lifting depression
Rosemary	Stimulative, excites the mind
Orange Blossom (Neroli)	Calms the mind and relieves stress
Lavender	Balancing and calming
Cedar	Clarity of mind
Bergamot	Uplifting and anti-depressant
Patchouli	Calming and anti-depressant

The fragrances can be used either to help create the conditions necessary for deep meditative work or to aid excitement and the creation of an ecstatic frenzy. Either extreme leads to a point where magic can be effectively made.

An Important Note

It should be realised that any combination of these techniques is only part of the strategy to achieve an end. Just as an athlete doesn't rely solely on his or her talent, so a Witch doesn't just rely simply on an ability to work magic [9]. It is merely one ingredient of an overall regimen. Many Witches think of how all that they do will be focussed onto achieving their aim, and sit down and plan their strategy in their Book of Shadows or journal. They think about what specific actions they will take, both magical and *non-magical*. They decide when they will carry out these things, as well as build in a time when they will check back in their

Book of Shadows to make sure that they kept up with their plan. When they review, they make sure they change things that aren't working and try something else that will help them achieve their desire. Remaining flexible is very important.

Preparation

Along with having set an intention that you are totally convinced about, and have the will to succeed in, there are a number of other considerations before magical work can be started.

The correct tools must be gathered and any herbs, crystals or talismans that are intended for use should be readily available. These are best specially chosen in advance.

The Goddess and the God should be invoked in whatever form you feel most comfortable with. This could be the day to day personifications that are usually worked with, or specifically chosen forms for the magic in hand.

The circle must be properly set up and consecrated. As has been noted in a previous lesson, this is not so much for protection but more to facilitate the containment and direction of energies raised.

You may also want to be purified. It can often be a good idea to have a ritual bath before hand, where particular herbs or essential oils have been added to stimulate or relax the mind as desired [10].

A Ten Point Magical Key

You can expect a good deal of success in magic and the ability to produce literally life changing results (if that is what you want) by following the ideas in this plan consistently.

1. Before magical practice can begin in earnest it must be possible for the practitioner to be able to meditate for one whole minute without the mind wandering. Without this most basic of skills little true success can be expected.

2. Realise that magic is part of a strategy; it is a very important constituent but that is all. With only flour you can't bake a cake.
3. Set intentions very carefully. They must be things that carry a deep conviction and are driven by absolute determination. They should be visualised strongly and in detail.
4. Never ever wish harm on another. Always bear in mind the *Wiccan Rede*: "An' it harm none, do what thou wilt."
5. Make sure any magic you do for others has their consent.
6. Review intentions and strategies regularly. Change things that don't work and try something else. Keep a record of what works and doesn't. Remain flexible but stay focused on the intention if you still believe in its validity. Remember -often to achieve something large, lots of small steps must be taken.
7. Start small; practice magic to achieve little things to start with and allow confidence to grow.
8. Experiment with a variety of ways of making magic. Find which ways suit best. Trial and error can only be used here.
9. Study the Kabbalah, Astrology, Alchemy and herbs. All can be used to build up a knowledge base of correspondences which will be very helpful in all kinds of magical work.
10. Give thanks to the Goddess and the God when the desired results are achieved.

More Advanced Magical Work

There are many techniques that are still to be learnt such as the art of constructing talismans, candle magic, cord magic, use of amulets and so on. These can all be found out about in the *Wicca Advanced Course*. The reason you will be trained in these skills at a later date is to get you first to practice the things outlined in this lesson. Without this firm basis all the talismans, cord tying and

amulet making in the world won't get you very far. Too often, beginners are encouraged into using these things as if they are somehow magical in themselves, *they are not*, and those that pretend that they are, are doing a big disservice to the Wiccan community. The magic comes ultimately from the God/dess and through you. This is not to say such items won't improve your magical experience, often they will, but they are of *secondary* importance.

Research Project

Please note: Whether you realise it or not this lesson marks something of a crossroads. You now have in your possession the basics of some of the most powerful teachings in Wicca. When used correctly and consistently, the things you have learned have the strength to quite literally change your life for the better. It remains to be seen, though, whether you will recognise the lesson materials for what they are, and whether you will take action on them. This is why you are at a crossroads. If you follow the path then you will become a most effective Witch, but if you decide to rush on quickly by and not put this lesson into practice you will merely become someone who is a Witch in name but little else. As always, the choice is yours.

Those that have taken things to heart will now take the opportunity of this lesson's research project to lay the ground work for an effective programme of magic. If you haven't yet done so already, think of some dreams, wishes or intentions that you have. Try to think of at least ten or so that you are absolutely convinced and determined that you are going to achieve in life.

Try to order them into things you will do in the short term, things you will do in the medium term and things you will do in the long term. When you have done this write them down. This is one of the most powerful things you can do because now every time you open your Book of Shadows or journal they will be there and you will have to keep them in mind.

Next, think carefully about how you will achieve some of them. Start with the short term things that you want. Think about what magical work you will do, what things will you need? Will you want specific incense, herbs and words of power? What magical technique will you use? Think about the non-magical things that you will do and write those down too. As well as doing this, write down when you will do these things and then keep to it.

You now have a strategy, which you should make sure you review every week. If you haven't done something then make sure you do it the next day, if something didn't work then write down what else you will try and make sure you do it.

As we have already noted, perhaps this doesn't much feel like making magic; to some it will feel more like keeping a diary of what you have done and need to do, but that is precisely one of the secrets.

Exercises

This chapter you are provided with a further meditation and magical exercise.

The Flat Land

This meditation will allow you to subtly change your perception of what you are as a being and how you relate to all things in physical existence. Witches often see that humans are expressions of energy that are grouped together in a particular way. The difference between us, and, say a chair, is that its energy grouping is different. All things are localised clumps of energy within one giant energy web. There are many similarities between Wiccan beliefs in this respect and those of Quantum Science which has a similar take on the Universe.

Ground and centre. Light a candle in your meditation space. Use frankincense or musk to perfume the air if you wish. Use a seven, seven, seven breathing pattern (i.e. breathe in for seven, hold for seven and breathe out for seven). When you are ready close your eyes and listen to the sounds that you can hear -the car in the street, the birds in the garden, the wind in the leaves, a child calling in the distance. As you listen try not to distinguish one sound from another. Allow them to all blend into one. One great backdrop of sound.

In your mind's eye imagine a world that appears flat and two dimensional, there is a great variety of colour, but that is the only way to distinguish one thing from another. Imagine a world without boundaries, where one thing blends into another; where you end and where the ground or chair you are sitting on begins is not defined. See the colours begin to run into each other. At first the scene resembles a painted picture that has been ruined with water but gradually, as the colours bleed and mingle, a white light is created – a searing, almost blinding brightness. Everything is one. One great web of energy.

Say or chant *"I am that, this is that, you are that, we are that, they are that. All is one"*.

When you are ready, concentrate on your breathing once more. Breathe in for seven, hold for seven, and breathe out for seven. Come to normal consciousness and record your thoughts in your Book of Shadows or meditation journal.

The Copper Pocket Watch

In this exercise you will be visualising a pocket watch made of shiny copper. Because all things are on some level connected, and are all made from ultimately the same energy field, we are all able to attune ourselves to this energy and manipulate it. This is done primarily through the art of visualising our will. The following exercise will help you to develop your ability in this respect. Remember that first you visualise and then you create. Bear in mind, too, that the quality of the visualisation greatly affects the outcome of what you have willed. It may take quite a number of attempts before you really feel you can see the pocket watch, don't worry unduly if it never feels quite "real" either -these things take time.

Ground and centre. Use a nine, eight, nine breathing pattern. Hold out your dominant hand in front of you palm up. Visualise holding a copper pocket watch. Will (but don't strain) the image into reality. Touch the casing with your other hand, feel the cold of the metal, the pleasing ridges of the winder. Bring it closer to you. Examine the dial, the numbers and hands, its marks and scratches. Put out your tongue and lick the casing –it tastes sharp like a penny. You can smell the wet copper. Now put it to your ear, the steady ticking is pleasing and peaceful. When you are ready, place your other hand over it and will the watch to disappear.

Concentrate on your breathing once more. Breathe in for nine, hold for eight, and breathe out for nine. Come to normal consciousness and record your thoughts in your Book of Shadows or meditation journal.

Notice that this exercise uses all five senses. When visualising things to manifest on the Physical Plane it is very important to use the sensate range. The better you become at doing this the more powerful the visualisation will become and the greater the influence in the Physical World will be felt. Those that doubt

the efficacy of this technique would do well to remember that to create anything in life that we want, first we have to imagine.

End Blessing

I hope that you will take what you have learnt in this lesson to heart, for I believe that magic used in the way outlined in the lesson can only bring good things to you and the world.

You are now nearly half way through the course, so congratulations! It's not easy to stay dedicated for so long.

May the great Goddess and God show you the way to a life that is truly magical and full of good things.

Blessed Be,

In Love and Light,

See you next lesson!

Notes

[1] Throughout these lessons I have used “magic”; others, following Aleister Crowley, add a “k” to distinguish it from stage magic of the illusionist variety.

[2] See Aleister Crowley, *Magick*, edited, annotated and introduced by John Symonds and Kenneth Grant, Guild publishing 1986, p. 131. There are many descriptions that will be met with, yet most will be based on Crowley’s statement which remains the best single definition. I do not recommend this difficult book to beginning students, and indeed it is best approached with caution. That said, when used with a prior solid grounding in magical arts, the book is a great resource.

[3] A general blessing for health and happiness is fine, but specific healing work should always be on request. You have to use your own judgement about what will interfere too far in people’s lives, and it is best to err on being cautious.

[4] It is usually seen that there are eight ways to make magic. There are other methods which I have opted not to include in *Wicca Revealed*. Those that wish to find out more could start by looking at Janet and Stewart Farrar, *A Witches Bible*, Part II, Phoenix Publishing Inc, 1996, p.52.

[5] Some Wiccans will chant *The Witches’ Rune*. This can be great for setting a general tone to a Sabbat but it should not be used to effect an intention, as it is not specific enough.

[6] A good source of such names is Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, edited and annotated by Donald Tyson, Llewellyn, 2004 or S. Liddell McGregor Mathers, *The Key of Solomon the King*, Weiser, 1990.

[7] This is no doubt why Gerald Gardner claimed the New Forest coven used this technique during World War II to stop Hitler’s invading armies, prevent Napoleon crossing the English Channel and hold the Spanish Armada at bay, see Janet and Stewart Farrar, op. cit. II, p.57. Most Witches these days have long since departed from such fanciful historic notions.

[8] The table has been largely based on information in Joannah Metcalfe, illus. Rosamund Gendle, *Herbs and Aromatherapy*, Bloomsbury Books, 1993.

[9] It may be noticed by the reader that such techniques outline in this paragraph are used by many successful non-Wiccans. The business world, for example, is full of people who do very similar things in the sense of planning and reviewing. They will even use specific visualisations and calming techniques. Here, though, Witches have an edge as they are very advanced practitioners of meditation and their magical visualisations can be much more powerful.

[10] Please note, certain herbs and essential oils are inadvisable for pregnant women or those with sensitive skin.

Legal disclaimer: It should perhaps go without saying that magic should never be relied upon to effect cures for medical problems. Always consult a qualified medical practitioner first when the need arises.

Chapter Six: Esbats and Moon Magic

Esbats and Moon Magic

Merry Meet and Welcome to the Class!

Let's just pause for a minute and savour the fact that you have come so far. This is really fantastic progress and you should be rightly proud of your achievements.

In this lesson you will learn about:

The Wiccan gathering known as an Esbat.

How to make magic using the energies of the Moon.

Continuing on, there is a research project for you to complete.

There are also magical exercises for you to work on.

Finally, there is a blessing.

Esbats

Esbats are the main monthly gathering of Wiccans that happen traditionally at, or around, the Full Moon. Some groups also celebrate the New Moons and, much less commonly, the first and last quarters as well. In all there are usually thirteen Full Moons a year; however some annular periods have only twelve because a lunar month is actually around 29.5 days long. The use of the word “Esbat” in Wicca comes from the writings of Margaret Murray who made a false connection with the word's coincidental resemblance to “Sabbat” when researching the European Witch trials [1]. In fact, the term derives from the old French *Esbat*, which meant something like “frolic” or “romp”, and carried sexual connotations. It was used during the persecutions to describe the behaviour of Witches when adoring Satan.

Modern day Wiccans worship the Full Moon as it is seen as the embodiment of the Goddess during her most powerful phase. In practice, though, meeting on

the precise day often doesn't happen as life's other varied commitments make gathering at the ideal time difficult. When this is the case Witches usually choose a point before, but near to, the full aspect. This is because it is thought better to carry out an Esbat ritual when the Moon's powers are on the increase.

Many Witches also like to carry out Esbats late at night around midnight. One of the reasons for doing this is that "the Witching hour" marks a boundary between one day and the next. It is the time of the deepest daily descent of the Sun, from which point its energies begin their rise, and it is considered by some to be the most potent and significant time of daily change, which compliments the strength of the Moon at this time. Not everyone is a night owl, though, and many Wiccans carry out their Esbats during the day – this can be seen as being perfectly justifiable for the Moon often reaches its full stage during daylight hours [2]. As always, in Wicca it is what seems right to you that counts.

An Esbat is a time when the Goddess and God are invoked and magic is worked. For those who are members of covens it is also a social occasion when bonds and friendships are strengthened. In general the most successful Esbats are planned and thought through. Exactly what form will the ceremony take? What magic is to be worked and how? What other activities will happen? These kinds of thoughts are important, for covens and solitaries alike, as a disorganised Esbat often degenerates into aimlessness and people can become de-motivated. That said, there are also times when spontaneity can be made to work [3], but this is usually best done after having had experience of an ordered approach.

Some Considerations before Beginning

During this monthly event covens and solitaries have a real chance to regularly put into practice the things that they have been learning to make magic. Covens also have an opportunity to forge a community. Many Witches are attracted to them for this reason and those that are truly successful have something of a family atmosphere, where they have created a safe, reliable place for a Witch to be.

Although primarily about working magic [4] Esbats are enhanced by linking them with the spirit of the moment.

One way this can be done is to associate the Full Moons with the Celtic Tree Calendar [5]. Based on the Celtic *Ogham* alphabet, the thirteen Celtic Tree Months are:

B - Beth, Birch Month

L - Luis, Rowan Month

N - Nion, Ash month

F - Fearn, Alder Month

S - Saille, Willow Month

H - Huath, Hawthorn Month

D - Duir, Oak Month

T - Tinne, Holly Month

C - Coll, Hazel Month

M - Muin, Vine Month

G - Gort, Ivy Month

Ng - Ngetal, Reed Month

R - Ruis, Elder Month

The cycle begins with Birch, which is the New Moon nearest to the Winter Solstice (either before or just after). Birch or Beth month ends at the dark of the New Moon and Rowan or Luis month then starts when the New Moon becomes visible again, and so on [6].

Another way of tuning in to the energies of the day on which an Esbat is held is to find out about the mythology surrounding the date. Most days of the year are associated with a particular goddess or god as well as a related festivity [7]. This information can then be woven into the Esbat ceremony or decoration around the room.

Ideas for a Structure

Although there are no set orders of service in Wicca, a successful Esbat still needs a structure. The following can be easily used and adapted by both covens and solitaries.

The initial part of an Esbat consists of the Opening of the Temple, performed in exactly the same way as was learnt in Chapter Three. The program of work can then be begun. Generally magical work is carried out at first.

What exactly this consists of will vary but healing requests may be dealt with, as well as spells performed for certain things to come about. Divination and other psychic acts can also take place, as they are both enhanced by the power of the Full Moon. Depending on the nature of these things, various techniques will be used that were learned of last lesson. When working in a coven, the High Priestess has usually found out if there are any special requests before hand, so that these may be incorporated in the Esbat. She will also probably have considered what actions these demands necessitate and, in conjunction with the High Priest, devised the right kinds of actions to be undertaken. Any materials for spell work will also have been thought of at this initial stage, so that they are to hand when the Esbat takes place. Solitaries will, of course, have thought about such things for themselves.

Once this work is over there may be readings, poems and music; those who are creative will have made up their own for the occasion. Of particular value to a coven are those that require some form of interaction. Chants, drumming and song are a very effective way of cementing a social group together and mean that everyone takes part. Solitaries can make use of such things as well, and these can be used as affirmations or starting points for meditations. Make sure, though, that you have considered the neighbours, particularly if the Esbat is in a flat and held in the small hours. There is no quicker way of spoiling a reputation in a community than by keeping it awake all night.

Now that the main business is finished, the cakes and ale (or wine) are consecrated. Covens will then spend the time socialising, while solitaires might listen to music or read within the protection of the circle.

Just for Covens

Often Esbats are used as an opportunity to educate each other by setting discussion topics around issues within the Craft that get members to debate and think about subjects that matter. Care should be taken by the High Priestess and Priest to make sure that everyone has a voice, and that all views are respected. This may mean one of them acting as chairperson. Good topics guaranteed to get dialogue going are around initiations, the history of the Craft, the image of women in history and so on.

Games

The Craft is a joyful religion and it is only natural that Witches incorporate a time to play. Although it is possible to come across some high-minded Wiccans who feel that such a subject has no place in the serious art of working magic, most Witches would agree that communal games encourage group participation and help create important social ties. Having a laugh together is important. A few favourite games of Magicka School are given below.

The Three Elements

This is really a version of the children's game "Paper, Stone, Scissors" except that it is played with Fire, Water and Air (the three chief Elemental Forces). It can be played in pairs round the circle.

In the traditional game two players make a symbol of paper, stone or scissors independently of the other. The point of the game is to have chosen an object that beats the other player based on the combination below.

- Stone blunts scissors
- Paper covers stone
- Scissors cut paper

In our version the game is similar except that symbols are made for Fire, Water and Air:



The Elemental symbols of Fire, Water, Air (and Earth)

A “V” sign makes the downward pointing triangle that symbolises Water; the same sign inversed makes an upward pointing symbol that makes the sign for Fire. A flat hand stands for Air, symbolising the cross bar in the symbol. The winner is based on the following:

- Water puts out fire (obviously)
- Air carries water (in the form of clouds)
- Fire stirs up Air (in the form of thermals)

The Witch’s Secret

This is a game for the whole coven to play together. All members sit in a circle tightly together so that there are no spaces. One person stands in the centre. This is the person with the “secret”. This need not be anything terribly revealing (although a lot of fun in the game can be the disclosure of something amusing). After revealing their secret, everyone must get up and run to the other side of the circle, sitting down quickly and as closely together as possible with the idea that one person is left with no space to sit. That individual then becomes the new person with the “secret”.

The Candle

The Witches sit closely in a circle. One holds a candle. Another stands behind those sitting on the floor. The candle is passed round the circle while the Witch on the outside tries to blow it out. When this has been achieved they are able to join the circle swapping places with the Witch who was holding the candle.

There are many such games that can be found, and a whole host of sites on the Net where these are available for free [8]. In general, I prefer the ones that are non-competitive, as life is not just about winners and losers.

Winding Up

When The High Priestess or solitary Witch decides the Esbat is over the circle is taken down as learnt in Chapter Three.

Moon Magic

The Esbat is essentially a time of making magic. One of the most powerful ways to enhance its efficacy is to work the art in line with the rhythms of the Moon and the stars. In this section of the lesson we consider the Moon in history, look briefly at its role in religion, and then go on to consider its influence on magic.

The Creation of the Moon

The Moon first came into existence some four and a half billion years ago. In the scientific community it is now generally thought that as the Earth formed it was hit by another growing planetary body. This blew out rocky debris that went into orbit around the Earth and clumped together to form our satellite [9]. The Moon was once much closer to us than it is now [10] and would have seemed much larger in the sky. Its gravitational effects were more profound and affected the landscape [11], animal and plant life much more deeply than it does today.

Billions of years after its creation, and gradually pulling away from the Earth, the rhythms of the Moon still have an undeniably powerful effect on certain aspects of nature. The oceans swell and strain to its pull and various forms of marine life respond to its light or gravitational power [12]. There is also evidence to suggest that plants seem to grow better when grown in sympathy with the Moon's phases, and many believe that the farming of animals should be dictated by its rhythms as well [13].

The effects on us may also be just as profound. There are few women in the Craft who do not believe that their monthly menstrual cycle is related to the Moon [14]. And in the media there are many tales of more murders, accidents, cases of mental illness and so on, when fullness is reached [15].

The Moon in History and Religion

In prehistory the Moon seems to have been symbolised by animals that somehow personified it such as the frog, the snail and the snake. It seems likely the frog was chosen as some cultures saw that the Moon's three large craters represented its form [16]. The snail could be associated with the Moon because of its shell's overall rounded shape and the fact that it withdraws into this and disappears from view. The snake was likely linked because of beliefs about its regenerative properties and connection with fertility.

As humankind began to work the land, deities began to be associated with the overseeing of farming. In this connection the Moon likely provided the first calendars as perhaps evidenced by prehistoric wall paintings [17] and stone carvings [18].

From here, our satellite seems to have become associated with healing and was believed to have governance over the body's moisture. Also, because it appeared to be reborn every month, it became a symbol of motherhood and immortality. Whether or not one regards the Moon's influence on such things as genuine, the fact that for so long in human history it has been regarded as influencing these things means that all our psyches have, in fact, been profoundly influenced by such beliefs.

The Moon has been worshipped since time immemorial as has been recorded in the oldest literatures of Egypt, Babylonia, India and China. It has become associated with, or is the embodiment of, many goddesses and gods from diverse cultures throughout history as the small selection on the next page shows:

Culture	Name	Description
Ancient Greek	Artemis	Goddess associated with the waxing Moon. Often identified with Selene and Hecate.
Ancient Chinese	Chang-o	Married to a hunter god, Chang-o stole his potion of immortality and had to escape to the Moon where she built the “Cold Palace”.
Ancient Roman	Diana	Diana was the Roman equivalent of Artemis. Often shown as an archer, the bow being reminiscent of the crescent Moon.
Ancient Babylonian	Ishtar	Goddess who ruled the Moon. The Lover of Tammuz.
Ancient Egyptian	Khonsu	Son of Amun and Mut, usually shown as a mummified youth and portrayed with a crescent and Full Moon symbol on his head.
Hindu	Soma	God of the Moon, lord of stars, plants and Brahmins. Associated with an intoxicating drink that bears his name.
Ancient Egyptian	Thoth	God of wisdom, time and scribes, husband of Maat.

As this list makes clear, the Moon deities are not always considered as feminine, the most famous male Moon god perhaps being Thoth. However, for Wiccans she is always portrayed as being female.

Magic of the Silver Lady

In magical theory the Moon is believed to govern the subconscious and, as you learnt in the lesson on magic, the subconscious provides an all important link to our divine natures. Quite how the Moon influences the mind is open to conjecture, but many Witches believe that it affects our unconscious natures, both individually and collectively. Because of this it can be used to aid magic, which, as you learnt last lesson, is about setting an intention and then releasing it into a void

of non-being. By learning to let an intention go in line with the Moon's rhythms it is believed that the magical effect of the will is strengthened.

It is possible to spend a lifetime studying the importance of the Moon in magical practice, like most things where the occult is concerned, and it is only feasible here to touch on a few basics.

One of the first things that need to be learnt is the phases of the "Silver Lady" that can be likened to a feminine life cycle.

In the Northern hemisphere [19] the Moon appears as in the picture below:



The first phase is that of the New or Dark Moon. This is the period when nothing can be seen, just before the first sliver of light appears [20]. It is as if she is a child about to be born.

From this initial stage the Moon begins to wax, or increase, during what is known as the First Quarter. Her energies are fresh and young corresponding to her childhood.

After the Half Moon she gets larger and larger, until the "gibbous" [21] stage is reached. This marks the beginning of her most powerful period.

Next arrives the Full Moon when her powers are at her height.

After this point she begins to wane, or decrease, although she is still full of energy.

The waning gibbous Moon marks the transition into her repose where our Lady's energies are now much weaker, but she is seen to have been made wiser by her journey through the cycle.

Finally, her dark aspect comes again. This is her most terrible, awe inspiring and creative time as she makes the ultimate transformation from death back into life.

For all of humankind's existence these phases have been observed and powerful beliefs of effects on our world have been formed.

In European culture such convictions were formulated into both High and Low Magic. For the ceremonial magician the precise position of the Moon could be taken into account when reckoning the best time for an event to take place. Further, grimoires like the *Key of Solomon the King* contained information about biblical correspondences and angelic forces of the Moon that could be called upon to create certain effects [22].

Low Magic would also consider the phases of the Moon but the calculations would be based on less accurate observations and the magic worked would be more about issues arising from healing, love and when to pick herbs. Correspondences, too, would be used, although these were based around crystals and metals such as silver or Moonstone. Folk beliefs also grew up where the day of the Moon, Monday, would become a time for emotions, clairvoyance, theft, jealousies and dreams, as well as activities concerning water or the sea.

Wiccans vary their practice between these forms of magic. Witches can be found who make careful and precise use of the position of the Moon based on astrological information, as well as those who work their art in broad sympathy with its waxing and waning aspects. Both methods are perceived as being valid and these are considered below.

The Moon in Astrology

Many Witches believe that it is best to work certain kinds of magic depending on what star sign the Moon is in. Where exactly the Moon is can be determined by consulting a good astrological ephemeris [23]. Every two to two and a half days the Moon leaves one star sign (or house) and enters the next (everyday spent in a sign is known as a mansion). In each sign a particular influence on the unconscious is exerted by the Moon and this affects the kind of magic that can be worked. Judging the right time can be a subtle and involved thing to do, as it needs to be borne in mind that as the Moon enters and leaves each sign its

influence increases and decreases. Also, the particular phase that the Moon is in is significant, as well as the star signs on either side of the sign that the Moon currently occupies.

Each day of the month is auspicious or inauspicious for an activity to take place, and many Witches carefully take account of this fact when working their art.

The table on the next page [24] gives some indication of the periods that are favourable or unfavourable for different work:

Moon in:	Favourable for Issues and Acts of:	Unfavourable for Issues and Acts of:
Aries	Pioneering spirit, risk taking, leadership, self sufficiency, familial protection, aggression, quick change	Impulsiveness
Taurus	Stability, longevity, security, nurture, toughness, cautious progress, enterprise	Change, especially to do with money
Gemini	Communication, exchange of energy and ideas, play, family	New projects
Cancer	Home, family, refuge	Letting go of the past
Leo	Attention, self-expression, entertainment, showmanship, selling ideas, good impressions	Delegation
Virgo	Perfection, education, health issues, caring, precision, details, common sense, intellectual matters, bargains, health issues	Involving self doubt
Libra	Giving to others, romance, new friendships, harmony and balance, self reliance, charm	Emotional conflict
Scorpio	Energy and concentration, secrets, control	Obsession, money, anger, ill feeling
Sagittarius	Trips and journeys. Breaking routines. Intellectual and imaginative endeavours	Sensitivity
Capricorn	Self discipline, rules and regulations, organisation, goal setting, long range planning, practical things, hard work	Lifting the emotions
Aquarius	Independence, trend setting, change, social activities	Idealism
Pisces	Mystical issues, spirituality, creativity, divination	Manipulation

Others Witches divide the type of magic performed at different times by classifying it by the Four Elements and then working it in harmony with the Moon, as in the table below:

Element	Area of Magical Working	Moon in
Earth	Matters of the body, health, money, work	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn
Air	Matter of the intellect and communication	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius
Fire	Matters of love, passion and sex	Aries, Leo Sagittarius
Water	Matters of emotion, divination and psychic happenings	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces

A less involved approach relies on looking solely at the phase of the Moon and tailoring the type of magic to whether it is waxing, full or waning. In general, it is seen that things where increase is needed should be worked during the period beginning with the first light of the New Moon, up to when it is full. Whereas things that need a lot of power to perform should happen around the Full Moon. Conversely, magical acts where decrease is preferable are best believed to take place through the waning stages.

However, many see that there is a bit more to it than that and, whilst not going to the intricacies of working out the Moon's mansions, there are a number of methods of dividing this time a little more precisely. This is indicated in the table on the following page:

Moon Phase	Period	Areas Where Magic Can be Worked
New Moon	New Moon to three and a half days after	New ventures and beginnings. Love, romance. Health. Looking for work
Waxing	Seven to Fourteen days after the New Moon	Love. Wealth, success, fortune. Courage. Friends
Full	Fourteen to Seventeen and a half days after the New Moon	Prophecy. Protection. Divination. Healing. Love. Money matters. Dreams
Waning	Three and a half to ten days after the Full Moon	Banishing. Getting rid of addictions. Getting rid of illness and negativity
Dark Moon	Ten and a half to fourteen days from the Full Moon	Exploring deep seated angers, stresses and passions. Bringing justice to bear. Banishing bad habits

Research Project

In this lesson we have done little more than touch on the subject of Moon Magic and the Moon in religious beliefs. For this month's research project I would ask you to take the opportunity to find out all you can about our satellite. Subjects to include in your studies might include:

- Astronomical data.
- Moon lore –tales and stories about the Moon from different cultures.
- Moon goddesses and gods.
- Beliefs about the powers of the Moon.
- Scientific studies about the Moon's influence on nature.
- The Moon in Astrology.

Such a study will provide the most marvellous compendium of knowledge that will make working with the Moon's energies a rich and rewarding experience.

Exercises

This month there are three new exercises for you to try that will expand your magical practices. They are especially useful for developing healing abilities.

All are best worked with a magical partner although it is also possible to perform them as a solitary and adaptations are given in each section.

To See the Aura

In 1939 the Armenian Semyon Davidovich Kirlian (1898-1978) and his wife Valentina discovered a high voltage photographic technique that they claimed produced evidence of the Aura in living things. This was supported by evidence from photographic experiments that involved producing images of a cut fresh leaf. The Kirlians' technique revealed a ghostly outline of the part that had been removed [25]. This was the "auric" energy that the couple believed was a constituent of all life on Earth.

During your studies you will find many definitions of what exactly an Aura is. The simplest view is that it is energy that surrounds the entire body in an ovoid shape that can be visualised as light of varying colours. Explanations of what this light might be include electromagnetic fields, soul vibrations, manifestation of the different layers of human existence, chakric energy or a reflection of surrounding energy fields. In the Wiccan community all of these can be met with and there is as yet no standard definition among occultists [26].

Most people are able to see something of the Aura with a little practice, rarely, though, do people instantly achieve this to the extent that they can see myriad colours of light surrounding the body. This can be achieved over time, but, like just about everything else in Wicca, the skills must be built up gradually. That said, once the knack has been attained, it will then be possible to see all living things infused with a wonderful glow effect.

The easiest way to see the Aura is in half light. So, before beginning, draw the curtains or, if working at night, use a single candle.

Next ground and centre and perform any visualisation that you have found helpful to induce relaxation.

If working with a partner get them to stand against a dark or black backdrop (this works best if the partner is nude). Look over the partner's entire body without straining or squinting. The best approach is to see the body as a whole, all at once, where the eyes are not looking for one thing in particular. Some people will see a faint outline, a kind of double image, whereas others may see a soft white glow. Over time it is then possible to see more until a whole panoply of shades is revealed.

If working as a solitary the processes are the same, in that grounding, centring and relaxation takes place. You will then need a mirror so that you can see yourself when standing against a black background.

To Sense the Aura

Another way of experiencing the Aura is to sense it with your hands. Ground, centre and relax as before. When working with a partner make sure that they are lying down and are comfortable. Then run your hands slowly over their body about two to three centimetres away from their skin. The best place to do this is over the torso as here the main organs of the body are located and it is relatively easy to sense energy in this part of the body. Next, pull your hand up a few centimetres and then move it back down. Solitaries can do this to themselves. Many people will feel a sensation that may be described as a kind of static cushion and it is believed this is the Aura.

Over time it will be noticed that various parts of the body emanate different forms of energy. In those that may be sick some parts of the body will seem to vibrate healthily, whilst others may have an unhealthy feeling. Not It is possible to work with these less well areas and aid the healing process [27]. After performing this diagnostic act it is important to ground. This is because it is generally considered a bad idea to absorb another's energies as this can cause conflict with one's own natural rhythms.

Grounding can be achieved through visualisation as already learnt, or by placing your hands under cool running water until it is felt that all excess energy has dissipated.

Manipulating the Aura to Heal

One way of working with these energies is through the power of near touch. Passing the hands just over affected regions of the body and sending energy or drawing it away from the area can make a patient feel better. It can be seen that the vibrations of the Aura are being rebalanced by such an approach. Witches often feel that the dominant hand should send the energy, whilst the other should be used for drawing it off.

A good way to start learning this technique is to work with a partner's aches and pains (a solitary could work on their own). Instead of giving a massage, try near touch and see if the affect is appreciable. Over time you will learn what works and what doesn't. You will see what distance from the skin is optimal as well as the kinds of visualisations that may be helpful. Depending on their perception of what is needed practitioners commonly imagine either a cool light blue beam or a warm golden glow coming off their palm and descending to the affected area of the body.

Related techniques, like Therapeutic Touch, which has been the subject of serious scientific study [28], or Reiki [29], which is regularly used within the US National Health Service, are of interest to many Witches who often hold professional qualifications in such arts.

End Blessing

You have reached a stage in your studies where you have learnt much of the basics of Witchcraft –its history, the goddesses and gods, the circle, the tools, the basics of magic and now the Esbats. How does it feel to be becoming more Wiccan as everyday passes and to know that you have successfully come so far?

I wish you continued success and bless the path that you are on. May it bring you ever nearer the light of the Goddess and God.

Blessed Be

In Love and Light,

See you next lesson!

Notes

[1] The misuse of the word first appeared in Margaret Murray, *The God of the Witches*, 1933, Sampson Law, Marston & Co., Ltd.

[2] As the following table for 2006 makes clear the Moon reaches it's fullest at a variety of times during the day:

Jan 14 09:48

Feb 5 06:29

Mar 6 20:16

Apr 5 13:01§

May 5 06:13§

Jun 4 00:06§

Jul 3 17:37§

Aug 2 09:46§

Aug 31 23:56§

Sep 30 12:04§

Oct 29 21:25

Nov 28 06:29

Dec 20 14:01

[3] In particular among Wiccan authors, Starhawk makes much use of spontaneity throughout the rituals she leads, see *The Spiral Dance*, Harper, 1989.

[4] As opposed to a Sabbat which is more about seasonal celebration.

[5] This system is based on the Celtic Ogham alphabet, where each letter corresponds with a lunar month, or a solar season, as written of by Robert Graves in *The White Goddess*. A number of modern academic experts on Celtic religious beliefs refute Grave's ideas; see Peter Berresford Ellis, *The Fabrication of 'Celtic' Astrology* at <http://cura.free.fr/xv/13ellis2.html>.

[6] One of the best resources for this is Nigel Pennick, *The Pagan Source Book: A Guide to the Festivals, Traditions and Symbols of the Year*, Rider and Co, 1992.

[7] Ibid. Pennick's book contains a breakdown of all festivities and god/dess days throughout the year.

[8] For example, a whole variety of games that can be adapted for Witches with a little imagination can be found at

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/oxfordtours/games/gamerite.htm>

[9] This was first put forward by W. K. Hartmann, and D. R. Davis in the periodical *Icarus*, 24, 1975, p.505 and is now the standard scientific view. There is a page explaining their ideas at <http://www.psi.edu/projects/moon/moon.html>

[10] Estimates of up to 21,250 miles closer exist.

[11] The closer the Moon the higher the tides and the stronger the tidal effects would have been. As a result erosion would have been far greater.

[12] See for example: H. Marguerite Webb and Frank A. Brown, "Interactions of diurnal and tidal rhythms of activity in the fiddler crab", *Biological Bulletin*, 1965, 129, pp. 582-591 and J.D. Palmer "Daily and tidal components in the persistent rhythmic activity of the crab", *Sesarma Nature*, 1967, 215, pp. 64-66.

[13] The process of growing plants and keeping animals to the rhythms is nowadays enshrined in bio-dynamics originally founded by Rudolf Steiner in the 1920s. Steiner's system involved more than just working with the Moon phases though and was more a way of farming with regard to many of nature's rhythms. See <http://www.biodynamics.com/biodynamics.html> for more information.

[14] This is a claim that may be backed by science. See in particular Winnifred Cutler's "Study of the lunar cycle's influence on menstrual cycles" published in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 137:834, a copy of which can be found at <http://www.athenainstitute.com/sciencelinks/lunarandmenst.html>. Also with Wolfgang M. Schleidt, Erika Freidmann, George Preti, and Robert Stine, "Lunar Influences on the Reproductive Cycle in Women" in *Human Biology* December 1987, Volume 59 Number 6, this can be found at <http://www.athenainstitute.com/lunarmpl.html>.

[15] Some have attributed this to biochemical reactions in the body caused by positive ions present at the Full Moon., see <http://www.policeops.com/full-moon-ion-effect.htm> .

[16] This is a belief of some groups of Native North Americans. Other cultures in Africa, Mexico, Tibet and India, for example, see that the craters make a hare.

[17] Michael Rappenglueck, formerly of the University of Munich, has interpreted a dappled brown horse with a dark mane painted on the wall of the prehistoric Lascaux caves in France 15,000 years ago as part of the oldest lunar calendar. Groups of dots and squares painted by Cro-magnon man may depict the 29-day cycle of the Moon. A virtual tour of the cave may be taken here: <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/lascaux/en/f-dec.htm> and the horse can be viewed here: <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/lascaux/en/f-dec.htm>

[18] Dr Philip Stooke of the University of Western Ontario, Canada, has discovered a stone carving at the Neolithic site of Knowth in Ireland that may be the earliest Moon map in the world. See the article at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/325290.stm>

[19] In the Northern hemisphere, when the right side of the Moon is dark, the light part is shrinking and the Moon is waning. If the left side is dark, the Moon is waxing. The acronym mnemonic “DOC” represents this, where “D” is the waxing Moon; “O” the full moon; and “C” the waning moon. In the Southern hemisphere, this is reversed, and the mnemonic is “COD”.

[20] Some Witches see that the first appearance of the crescent is the New Moon.

[21] The word “gibbous” derives from the Late Latin word *gibbsus*, meaning “hunch-backed”, which in turn came from the Latin word *gibbus*, meaning “hump”.

[22] See S.L. Liddell MacGregor Mathers, *The Key of Solomon the King*, Weiser, 1990, pp. 76-79.

[23] One of the best is *Raphael's Ephemeris of the Planets*, published annually by Foulsham.

[24] It should be made clear that this is but one scheme made from many possibilities.

[25] A number of scientists have attempted to reproduce the Kirlians' photography, but most have concluded that the ghostly section of leaf was caused by microscopic etching on the glass that was used as a background surface for the photograph. Other explanations include surface moisture and pressure; all factors that may affect colour, shape and size of the resultant picture.

[26] It should be noted that most scientists are extremely sceptical that such a phenomenon exists and even struggle to find evidence of a human electromagnetic field, which is perhaps the most commonly given theory for what the Aura is. However, see <http://www.electrocrystal.com/index.html>, the website of Harry Oldfield, who claims to be able to show such a force exists.

[27] As always, if illness is suspected a qualified medical practitioner should be consulted first before trying any alternative therapy.

[28] Therapeutic Touch (TT) has been the subject of a study by the University of Alabama, Birmingham, USA. It must be stated that the results of this study were disappointing as the scientific method used was flawed -this has been seized on by sceptics as proof that TT doesn't work, see

<http://www.parascope.com/articles/1196/touch1.htm>. Still, the Pentagon thought the study was worth funding with over \$300,000 dollars, as the article makes clear.

[29] Reiki is a Japanese word that represents Universal Life Energy. Practitioners believe that when spiritual energy is channelled through the hands a patient's spirit is healed, which in turn heals the Physical Body. It is used as part of a complementary and alternative medicine. See <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/whatisreiki/>

Chapter Seven: The Lesser Sabbats, Part One - The Solstices

The Lesser Sabbats, Part One: The Solstices

Merry Meet and Welcome to the Class!

In this lesson you will learn about:

The two annual solstice celebrations.

Continuing on, there is a research project for you to complete.

There are also magical exercises for you to work on.

Finally, there is a blessing.

Introduction

Sabbats are the main seasonal celebrations of Wiccans. In total there are eight; Four Lesser and Four Greater. The Lesser Sabbats are firmly based on the key moments in the Sun's cycle, they comprise of the two solstices and the two equinoxes. The solstices mark the longest and shortest days. Essentially they are celebrations of the God as his strength waxes and wanes throughout the year. Those Wiccans that use the concept of the Oak and Holly King [1] see that at midsummer the Oak King is slain by the Holly King who then rises triumphant. The converse is, of course, true at midwinter. As the Sun is central to the rituals based around these times of year they are primarily Fire festivals, although, as we shall see, in midsummer the Goddess is represented by the balancing Element of Water and in midwinter is characterised by the Great Mother who gives birth to the God.

What Exactly is a Solstice?

Technically, the solstice is the point that the Earth's tilt faces directly at, or away from, the Sun. The term comes from the Latin *solstitium* which means "Sun stand still". This is because during the cycle of a year the position of the Sun, when viewed from the Earth, apparently moves North and South, yet when it

changes direction it momentarily appears to be stationary. The solstices are the times of the year when the Sun reaches its most Southerly or Northern point, either at the Tropic of Capricorn or the Tropic of Cancer. These extremes of movement create the longest and shortest days. Most importantly they are responsible for creating the seasons; one hemisphere of the Earth receives a bit more solar energy each day, while the other half receives a little bit less. When it is summer in the North it is winter in the South and vice versa. Witches are ever mindful of the changing tides of the year and it is perfectly natural that the fulcrum points should be celebrated. Due to the fact the Gregorian calendar [2] uses leap years, the exact day of the solstices change from year to year but are within the range of June/December 20th -23rd [3].

We will now look at each solstice celebration in detail.

Midsummer Solstice or Litha

*Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the church-way paths to glide:
And we fairies, that do run
By the triple Hecate's team,
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic*

William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act V, Scene 1, ln.2220

The midsummer solstice is a genuinely magical and ominous turning point in Nature. For our ancestors, who were tied much more to the land than we are today, this time of year was vitally important. The previous two Moons had brought leaves on the trees which were now full green, flowers that were in bloom, herbs that could be harvested, and food that was easier to come by. It was warmer and sunnier and the whole general atmosphere would have been more carefree and light. At Beltane (May Eve) confidence had grown high enough that

sexual unions took place and the months of May and June were a time of weddings. June's Full Moon was also considered the best moment at which to harvest honey and hence lovers who spent time together after their first joining, did so in the period of the "Honeymoon". But in the midst of all this joy about longer and lighter days a worrying change was about to happen – the days would begin to get shorter. Imperceptible though this was at first, our forefathers and mothers would have gradually noticed a significant shift that heralded a slow descent into darkness.

Summer solstice celebrations are widespread throughout the globe, although it is the European festivals that have had the most profound influence on Wicca. Here the key features have been bonfires, processions with torches, the rolling of burning wheels [4], a layer of Christianity supplied by the Catholic feast of St. John the Baptist [5], an emphasis on male and female energies, a desire to ensure a good harvest and acts designed to achieve the negation of evil spirits. A selection of events throughout history is given below to provide you with a flavour of some of the more common themes:

In Germany, on the eve of St John, whole populaces would supply straw and wood for their village bonfires that were then lit atop a mountain. At nightfall all would gather on the hillside. Men and boys would walk to the top and the women folk would make their way to a spring. A wheel would be lit at the peak with the intention of successfully rolling it all the way down to a river at the bottom of the hill, while the women cheered on. If the wheel was extinguished in the river then it was believed that a good crop would be reaped later that summer and autumn, if not then the villager's cattle would be plagued with illness. A similar festivity existed in Wales in the Vale of Glamorgan where a cart-wheel covered in straw was set alight and rolled down hill. If it burned for a long time then the harvest would be abundant.

In Scandinavia, St John's Eve fires were (and are) made atop hills at cross roads and in open spaces. In Denmark and Norway, these were apparently to protect against Witches off to meet with their Queen at Blocksberg [6], or to ward

off trolls and evil spirits who could be found wandering from their caverns on this, the most magical of nights. In Sweden, the fires, known as Balder's Balefires (*Balder's Balar*), were accompanied by the shooting of guns and rifles into the air. More than this, springs were supposed to take on fantastic medicinal qualities and sick people could be found who made special journeys to drink of their curative properties.

Leaping over fires was also a common theme at this time of year and was often something that young couples would do throughout Spain, Italy, Sicily and Greece. In Russia too, teenagers and those in their twenties used to jump over the flames wearing garlands of flowers and herbs. They would then drive their cattle through the smoke to protect them from the evil attentions of Witches and wizards. Others jumped over bonfires together carrying an effigy of the mythical figure Kupalo [7] who was then either burnt or thrown into a stream.

In Brittany the theme of protecting cattle was similarly present; bonfires were kindled just as the Sun dipped below the horizon and cattle were herded through their fumes to protect them from malign influences.

Modern Summer Solstice Celebrations

Solstice celebrations are alive and well at many locations throughout the world. In some places these are new events and in others they have been more or less continuous. Perhaps the most famous of these is centred on Stonehenge, situated on Salisbury Plain, in the English county of Wiltshire. Built in three phases by Stone and Bronze Age peoples [8], science has shown that the construction is far older than originally thought and predates the Druids [9] by thousands of years. Although there is much speculation as to its purpose, no-one really knows what it was created for. However, it seems fairly certain that it was intended to mark the summer solstice for the Sun's rays line up close to the Heel Stone and enter directly into the centre of the monument on that day. Celebrations here have come and gone over time. Some centuries have seen little in the way of festivities yet others, like the current period, have had regular events. Throughout the 1980s

many Pagans clashed with the police over access to the stones and this led eventually to the banning of solstice ceremonies for a short while. Now, since 2001, the stones are made available from 10pm on the solstice eve until 9am the following day for free. In general, between 15-20,000 people gather at this event that is especially popular with Druids and Wiccans.

In the USA one of the largest festivals takes place at Santa Barbara in California. On the Saturday immediately following the longest day of the year, there is a large solstice celebration that attracts around 100,000 people. There is something of a carnival atmosphere as the celebrations include music, dancing, giant puppets and floats. Of course, this is not a “Pagans only” event and is enjoyed by people of all backgrounds.

In continental Europe the celebrations are numerous. For example, in Italy midsummer folk traditions are alive and well despite two millennia of Catholicism. Here in Lunigiana there is hardly a hill-top village that doesn't organise some kind of fire festival, usually consisting of a torch lit procession and culminating in a feast of roast meat, fish and vegetables. Of course, most taking part would never dream of calling themselves Pagan, but, nonetheless, the roots of what they are acting out predate Christianity by centuries.

Midsummer Solstice Ceremony

The following has been written with a solitary in mind, in the appendices to the lesson will be found a ritual suitable for a coven or for families. As the weather is likely to be good at this time of year it makes sense to have this ceremony outside, especially as this will allow you to build a bonfire (if doing this, please make sure that it is done carefully, Witches that cause forest fires or accidentally burn down a neighbour's shed are going to be deservedly unpopular). It is also worth noting that many localities require permits for out-of-doors fires, even if they are contained in fire pits or rings. If at all possible, try to locate the ritual within close proximity of a stream or river. As already seen, water is a key component of many

solstice celebrations for it is the perfect compliment to fire and an excellent way of representing the Goddess.

How the altar is set up will depend on personal tastes. The ceremony is very much about the strength of the God and, because of this, symbols of Him will likely be in evidence. Things to use might be antler horns, carvings of the Sun, oak and holly sprigs as well as yellow and red candles. The Goddess can be symbolised on the altar by a chalice of water or, within the circle centre, by a cauldron.

As with the Esbats, the structure of a solstice ceremony will begin with the Opening of the Temple, performed in exactly the same way as in Chapter Three. If you haven't yet learnt how to do this without referring to written notes, now is a good time to make sure that you have. Make sure that the circle is cast away from any bonfire. This isn't just for safety reasons; the Sun is separate from the Goddess Earth and, to symbolise this, the fire can be kept apart from the circle.

As we saw above, traditionally the folk practices at this time of year are often about ensuring success for the harvest. To some extent, use can be made of this heritage by Wiccans. Certainly, the whole period of the summer solstice festivities are in part about giving thanks for plentiful food and recognising that the energy of the Sun makes this possible.

A prayer that may be used could be something similar to this:

*“Goddess and God,
The Earth and the Fire,
Together ensure our crops will grow higher.
May the Light from the Sun,
On this longest day,
Ever shine brightly and show us the way.*

*We give thanks for the good things
That in love we will take,
May our hearts be filled pure
So that joy we can make.*

*Light on Earth we praise you,
Earth and Light our guides,
Free us from our worries
And purify our minds.*

So mote it be!"

Many also see that the summer solstice is a time of focusing on one's Higher Self. The Sun is a symbol of connection to Spirit [10], and can be seen to represent heavenly light through which we may be purified and connect to the divine. One of the ways its power can be utilised is to aid the banishing of negative thoughts, anxieties and worries that get in the way of the calm state of mind needed to truly access Spirit.

Within the circle setting, place in a white coloured pouch the herbs sage, rosemary and garlic (if opting to do this make sure these things are to hand, on or near the altar, before casting the circle). All are easily found and have well known purifying properties.

Take the pouch in both hands and concentrate for a few moments on any concerns and worries that you may have. See them pouring from your mind and into the pouch where they are absorbed by the herbs. When you feel that the time is right hold the pouch in one hand and with the other pick up your wand or athame. Trace an invoking pentacle of Fire above it:



Intone:

“May these worries be burned and consumed by the fires of the divine so that they hinder me not in my quest for the Spiritual Light. So mote it be.”

Place the pouch on the altar, for it will be picked up and burnt in the fire when the circle is taken down.

Next walk over to the cauldron of water (or you can use the water in the chalice). Place the forefinger of your dominant hand in the liquid and say:

“From the Element of Fire to that of Water I am in tune with the energies of the Goddess and the God.”

Sprinkle your forehead with water and say:

“I am purified by the Fire of Spirit and cleansed by the waters of the feminine divine.”

Trace an invoking pentagram of Earth with your wet finger onto the ground and pronounce:

“So mote it be, in this my life on Earth.”

The circle can then be taken down as usual. Once dismantled, walk over to the fire and drop in the pouch of herbs. Watch it go up in flames and know that the thoughts you poured into it have lost their potency. You are now free to concentrate on higher things.

Take time to relax. It can be a great idea to have a picnic under a tree or by a nearby stream.

Before leaving make sure that the fire has been completely put out.

Midwinter Solstice or Yule

*Phebus wax old, and hewed lyk laton,
That in his boote declynacion
Shoon as the burned gold with stremes brighte;
But now in Capricorn adoun he lighte,
Where as he shoon ful pale, I dar wel seyn.
The bittre frostes, with the sleet and reyn,
Destroyed hath the grene in every yerd.
Janus sit by the fyr, with double berd,
And drynketh of his bugle horn the wyn;
Biforn hym stant braven of the tusked swyn,
And “Nowel “ crieth every lusty man.*

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Franklin's Tale*, ln.1245-1255

The midwinter solstice marks the time of year when the day is at its shortest and the Sun is weak and low in the sky. In many cultures, throughout the world, this has been taken to symbolise a time of re-birth, for, from this moment on, the Sun can only rise and grow in strength. Wiccans are aware of, and draw on, a variety of Pagan festivities and practices from this time of year that have been common throughout history. The first, and most ancient of these, seems to be a belief in the interplay between a masculine Sun and a female Earth.

Little is known about celebrations before history was written down and because of this the importance of solstice festivities can only be conjectured from the archaeological record. There are a variety of ancient stone monuments and tombs that seem to have been built at least in part with the winter solstice in mind and a relationship between the Sun's light and our planet.

For example, at Maeshowe, in the Scottish Orkney Islands, there is an ancient chambered cairn that has been carbon dated to around 2,750 BCE. It has a long entry tunnel that appears to be aligned so that when the Sun rises at the midwinter solstice it shines along this passage into the interior of the megalith, where it illuminates the back of the structure [11]. More famously, at Newgrange, in Brugh-

na-Boyne, situated in the Eastern Irish County of Meath, there is a huge burial mound dated to around 3,300BCE. It has an entrance passage that is around 18 metres or 60 feet in length. Above its entrance is a stone box that allows the light of the midwinter solstice at dawn to shine all the way to the back of its central chamber [12].

Both these structures were built by Neolithic peoples and one can only speculate as to the purpose of allowing the light to penetrate them at this time of year. Was the light supposed to ensure the resurrection of the dead from the womb of the Earth? Was it some way of ensuring that the Mother Earth was fertilised by the Father Sun? We cannot be sure, but most Wiccans see that the God is indeed the fertiliser of the Goddess. In another aspect, though, he is also her son.

The nativity of a god-man/saviour, born from a divine female is another consistent theme through many diverse cultures. In Ancient Egypt, for example, Osiris, the male productive force in nature, was said to die and was symbolically entombed on December the 21st surrounded by mourning priests. At midnight they would emerge from the inner temple and proclaim to the world that “The Virgin has given birth! The light is waxing” and would present a baby to worshipers who had gathered to witness the event [13]. In Classical Greece, during the rites of the vegetation god Dionysus, a goat was sacrificed and a baby brought forth to celebrate and symbolise the end of one cycle of his life and the beginning of the next [14]. Surrounding priestesses mourned the closing of one phase and rejoiced at the start of another. The Roman Empire celebrated the birth of Mithra (also known as Mithras), the central figure of Mithraism, a Persian religion that had come to be adopted from its introduction around 68 BCE [15]. Mithra was the slayer of the Divine Bull, from which all vegetation sprang. His birthday was December the 25th and celebrated as *dies natalis solis invicti* or the “Birthday of the Invincible Sun” [16]. Later of course, as the Empire was Christianised, Jesus, the god-man born from a virgin, was to replace the bull-killer. As is well known, he came into the world at Bethlehem, which translates as “the House of Bread”. It is

striking that his supposed birthday was the same as the Persian god's and that his place of birth was associated with corn; both facts seem to reveal that to some extent Jesus was yet another of a long line of dying and resurrected solar vegetation deities, linked to the midwinter solstice [17].

All these gods can be seen to be synonymous with the Sun and fertility to a greater or lesser degree, but there is another more primordial way that the Sun can be represented, and that is through fire.

In Europe, particularly amongst the English, French, German and Southern Slavic peoples the burning of a special Yule log was a popular part of festivities when the Sun was at its lowest. This had been much more of a domestic celebration than the midsummer events, presumably because of the desire to be indoors during the winter months. A log, usually of oak, would be burned for a little each day from Christmas Eve until Twelfth Night. In Britain, large Christmas candles were lit as well and, along with the light from the Yule log, the whole house would be illuminated, symbolically bringing Sunlight into the depths of winter. Often the log would be kept until the following year for its magical properties. In many countries it was believed that it had the power to protect the house from fires or lightning strike, as well as cure cattle of illnesses. Others believed it would negate evil Witchcraft and sorcery. Another common theme was that its ashes would ensure the fertility of the land, echoing the ancient idea of the Sun as impregnator of the Earth [18].

Midwinter Solstice Ceremony

Typically, many of the above ideas are incorporated into Wiccan midwinter celebrations. The following has been written with a solitary in mind, although at the end of the lesson will be found a ritual suitable for a number of Witches.

This ceremony can be used either in or out of doors. As we have seen, throughout the ages midwinter has very much been about the celebration of the birth of light, the impregnation of the Earth and a variety of vegetation gods. The altar can be set up to reflect this. As with the decorations for the midsummer

solstice, Sun symbols will likely be in evidence, a figure of a baby can be used to represent the infant God [19], a wide bellied Goddess figurine can represent his fertile Mother and evergreens like pine, ivy and holly are obvious choices to represent the continuation of vegetation. These may be complimented by dead leaves from other trees, especially oak.

In the centre of the circle should be placed the cauldron with several large candles inside; these can be either white or red. If you don't have a cauldron a large plate can serve just as well. If working outdoors a fire can be laid ready to light during the ritual, if your cauldron is large enough put the logs inside of it, as it is intended to symbolise light penetrating the Earth, or the God impregnating the Goddess.

Perform the Opening of the Temple.

Stand before the cauldron or fire and say words to the effect of:

*“Though the world seems so cold,
And the night has got such sway,
Let me not forget
This is the God’s special day.
Born from our Goddess,
The Bringer of the Light,
From now on will grow brighter
Shortening the nights.
With his power the Goddess
Will clothe the Earth in green,
Winter will move over
And spring again be seen.”*

Light the fire and then say something similar to the following:

*“The fire has been lit,
The God again returns,
I turn my thoughts to the year ahead
And the new things I will learn.*

Praise be to the Goddess, The Mother of our lives!

Praise be to the God, triumphant in the sky!"

During the midsummer ritual the opportunity was taken to burn away cares and worries. This time of year is much more about hopes and aspirations for the year ahead. Commonly people make New Year's resolutions and then don't keep them. A more powerful thing to do is to set an intention. This shouldn't be something made up on the spot and it is a good idea to have thought about a suitable thing to focus on well ahead of the ritual. If there is one thing, one big thing, that you desire to achieve over the year ahead what would it be?

Again this part of the ceremony incorporates a pouch (that should be golden or yellow), so you will need to make sure that you have one to hand before you begin. It should be filled with several acorns.

Take the pouch in both hands and concentrate on visualising what it is that you want to achieve. Holding your wand (or athame if you prefer) in your dominant hand, and pointing at the pouch held in the other, say your intention out loud using suitable words of power.

Then say words to the effect of:

"Oh mighty Goddess, I commend unto your care these acorns that they may put firm foundations of roots into your earth and grow ever stronger reaching upwards to the light."

Place the pouch on the altar.

The ceremony is now over and the circle can be taken down. The cauldron candles or fire should be extinguished if they are going to be left unattended.

The pouch of acorns should then be taken and buried outside under a few inches of earth. Over the coming months, they will grow and be a powerful constant reminder to keep the intention that you cast, encouraging you to revisit and periodically review what it was you desired to happen.

There is now time to relax. Seasonal foods can be enjoyed, such as apples and nuts or even mince pies with Sun symbols or pentacles made of pastry on the top.

A Note about Midwinter Celebrations in the Southern Hemisphere

When it is midsummer in the Northern hemisphere it is, of course, midwinter in the Southern and vice-versa. Thus, when it is December in the North and the Sun is being re-born, in the South they are enjoying their longest days. This presents some difficulty for those that live in Southern latitudes because of the universality of the Christian Christmas celebrations. Those who are Wiccan in the Southern hemisphere are in something of a dilemma, for the traditional midwinter celebrations (such as Christmas and its festive trappings) go on about them during their midsummer. Even in Antarctica, which has 24 hour day light during December, it is Christmas that is celebrated by those who work there. Many Witches go along with this and celebrate the Christmas season at the same time as the Northern hemisphere, at least publicly, whilst privately they practice rituals that are in keeping with the true state of the Sun and welcome in its re-birth during June.

Making the Solstice Seasons Special

Most books on Wicca will give you rituals to perform throughout the year, but few will give suggestions about how to incorporate the celebrations more widely. Many students of this work have young children and it can be a lovely idea to make the solstices family affairs. Those who have Wiccan friends, or belong to a coven, can similarly involve a group. Below you will find many things that you might like to consider, as well as a variety of useful suggestions that are suitable for either the midsummer or midwinter solstice.

Family and Community

- How will the whole family be involved during the festivities? How will ties and bonds be strengthened? How will children be engaged?
- If working in a coven what will be the role of various Witches at this time? What kinds of things will they do by way of preparation? For

example, decorations can be made, arrangements of flowers, fruit and vegetables can be created and so on.

- Will ancestors be involved? One of the ways of doing this might be through prayers or through displaying pictures of the departed behind a lit candle or floral display.
- Check to see what local festivities might be going on (a good place to do this is at a local library). You can then take your friends, family or coven members along.
- What will be done to educate yourself and others around you further about this time of year? An obvious place to start looking is on the Internet where there is an enormous amount of information about the solstices freely available.

Timing and Length

Consider whether to have the festivities on the day of the solstice or at the nearest weekend.

- Will it be an all night affair? Will it take place at sunrise, noon or the actual astronomical moment? How long will the ceremonial aspect of the event be? This is an important consideration if young children are to be present.
- If there are other events such as communal meals, parties and so on, will these take place on the solstice itself or be spread over a number of days?

Constituent Parts

- Will there be some form of gift giving? Will there be a special meal? Will there be a party? Invites could be made to advertise the event by family or coven members.
- Will the party have some form of structured gaming?

Setting

- Will the event take place in or out of doors? What kind of space will be suitable for the amount of guests/family present? If indoors which room(s) will be most suitable? If outdoors will the event be within your own grounds, in the park or at a nature reserve?

Depending on what kind of celebration is wanted, here are some more detailed ideas that will help to make the solstice special:

A Solstice Feast

- Favourite foods and drinks of those who take part should be prepared. Many Witches like to make these as seasonal as possible, so pizza, crisps and coke are out in favour of something more traditional for the time of year.
- It is important to give thanks at the table, which can be done by creating a short prayer to the Goddess and God.
- Foods can also reflect the fact this event is a celebration of the Sun. Some Witches who are creative cooks might like to prepare pies, cakes, or desserts with Sun signs or pentagrams on them.
- The table can be decorated with candles and Sun symbols, mirrors and other shiny objects. Some Wiccans decorate desserts with small candles, these are presented lit and each diner takes it in turns to state a desire for the coming year and then blow out the candle, this is perhaps most suitable for a midwinter celebration. **Note:** a wish is not made as they smack slightly of fantasies that may or may not come true. A statement of desire is setting an intention for something to happen. It is much more powerful than a wish.

- A time can be set aside after dessert for all those present to read a poem or short story that has relevance to the season. Those that are creative can make up their own, whilst others can use already published works.

Decorations

The making of decorations for the event can be a very enriching experience and will build anticipation for the event in both young and old.

- What kind of decorations will there be?
- If these are to be made, what materials will be needed?
- Who will do the making?
- When will they be made?
- What will be hung on the door or at the windows?
- Will the garden be decorated as well as the house?
- At midwinter will there be a Yule tree? This can be decorated with lights, Sun symbols and pentacles.
- How about having a Yule log, using it as Pagans did centuries ago?

Gifts

- Will there be gifts and what will these be [20]? They could be wrapped and left in a special location underneath a large Sun symbol or tree [21]. A good time to give them out might be either before or after the main celebration meal.

Outdoor Activities

Even if the main event is indoors it can still be a good idea to have some components of the festivities outside and in Nature. Wiccans are after all Nature loving.

- A large bonfire can be made.
- Food can be prepared such as baked potatoes with tasty fillings.

- Fireworks make a great end to the festivities.
- Make sure that adequate safety precautions are followed at all times, especially if children are present.

Activities

For all generations communal activities are a good way of learning and having fun together. Below are given a few ideas:

Circle of Lights

The group gathers in a circle and each holds a candle that has been placed in a jar (you don't want wax dripping everywhere and this makes it safer for young ones to hold). In the centre of the circle is placed a cauldron that contains several large candles representing the Sun.

Each person present can then contribute something to the group. Those that are young might say a short poem or give a quick reading, others, who are older or more confident, might teach something about the solstice and its importance.

When finished all candles can then be extinguished and the group can contemplate what life would be like without the Sun. Each member present should take a turn and say one thing that would not be in existence if the Sun were no more. For example, "There would be no more trees", "there would be no more hot days", "there would be no more playing in the sunshine". This kind of activity might seem more geared towards children, but it is actually incredibly powerful for adults to think about such things as well, for it puts one's existence into perspective and really focuses the mind on just how reliant we are on Nature.

The cauldron candles can then be lit and each person present takes it in turn to go up and relight their own candle. These can then be left in jars to burn out or may be extinguished after a prayer of thanksgiving for the light.

Singing

One of the best ways to do something together is to sing. A communal song is a great social leveller as all present must do the same thing. It is, therefore, very good for creating bonding. Further, if the songs are carefully chosen they can

enhance the meaning of the solstice. There are, in fact, many songs in popular culture to do with the Sun; the Beatles, for example, wrote several, and many Witches also have a stock pile of suitable Pagan chants.

Games

Make a Sun sign *piñata*. A *piñata* is a large hollow *papier-mâché* object that is filled with sweets and small gifts. It is then hung up at around head height. One player is blind folded and given a stick. The others form a circle round the *piñata*. The blindfolded player is led into the circle and spun round so as to be disorientated. They must then try to locate the *piñata*. To help them the others give clapping signals. They clap very quietly when the player is nowhere near the *piñata* and progressively louder as they get closer. They are allowed three attempts at a strike and then must swap with another player. When the *piñata* is finally broken its contents will spill on the floor and all present can share its contents [22].

Pass the parcel is also fun for adults and children alike. To give this classic a Pagan twist, include appropriate gifts that have something to do with the solstice.

Research Project

This lesson's research project is an obvious choice; find out all you can about the solstices. It is a good idea to give this some structure otherwise you may become lost in the morass of information out there.

Find out astronomical data about the solstice. A basic breakdown of what happens has been given above but there is actually more that can be found out.

Research further some of the key solstice events. It is an especially good idea to find out about those that are in your country and local to you.

Look into the associated goddesses and gods that the festivities are often based around. Again, basic information has been given in the text but there is much still to discover.

Whether working as a solitary, as part of a family or a coven think about creative things that can be done to welcome these important stages of the Sun's cycle. Find some traditional recipes; think about how to make decorations and so on. The celebrations will be only as special as you make them.

An excellent place to start this lesson's research project is Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. If you don't wish to buy a copy there is an On-line searchable version of the text at <http://www.bartleby.com/196/>. The book is an absolute goldmine of information. Please be aware though that this is the 1922 edition and not the version quoted in the footnotes in the lesson.

Exercises

Making Herbal Charms

Herbal charms consist of pouches of herbs that sometimes also contain other objects used to aid the focus of an intention. Correctly understood, they are a powerful means of reinforcing a desire or a will to do something. That they work is not so much because the herbs have an intrinsic magical value in themselves. Rather they correspond to certain areas of life and, in a way, are symbols of things one may want to achieve. By focussing on a symbol one attunes to its properties, creating powerful associations in the mind that reinforce the resolve to follow through an intention. Herbal charms can, therefore, be incorporated into an overall magical strategy to achieve something.

And it is not just herbs that have a symbolic importance; choice of the colour of fabric for their wrapping is also significant. Different colours have different effects on the mind, and a Witch will think carefully about the best hues to use for the work in hand [23].

The table on the next page gives a few basic herbal and colour correspondences, there are many others that space does not permit to write about [24]. Please be aware, though, that the information given is the generally agreed associations, some individuals will find that they need to use differing herbs and colours to achieve certain effects.

Some Areas of Life and their Associated Herbs

Matters of:	Herbs
Aspiration	Oak, acorns, gorse
Communication	Lime, fennel, hazel
Courage	Oak, acorns
Flexibility	Ivy
Healing	All-Heal, myrtle, white rose, willow
Love	Rose, lavender, jasmine, peach, apple
Money	Lavender, borage
Moon Magic	Hazel
Overcoming Obstacles/Winning Through	Laurel (bay)
Protection	Nettle
Purification	Garlic, rosemary, sage
Resolution	Oak, acorns, holly and its berries, mistletoe, vervain
Sexual Energy	Ginseng, mandrake
Sexual Love	Fig
Solidity and Stability	Cereal grains, especially wheat

The colours and their properties in the following table are based on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. As you will learn in the *Wicca Advanced* book or course, many magical practices are rooted to the Tree.

Colours and their Associated Properties

Colour	Property
White	Purification, purity, spirituality
Grey	Wisdom
Black	Understanding, consideration, time
Blue	Peace and stability, wisdom, service to others
Red	Protection, warning, courage, energy
Yellow/Gold	Beauty, harmony, balance, aspiration
Green	Love, change, play, instinctive energy
Orange	Truth, communication, quest for knowledge
Violet	Independence, unconscious energy, dreams
Olive, citrine, russet and black	Positive choices, solidity, faithfulness, reliability

It is possible to mix and match the herbs and colours. So, for example, if aspiring to something that takes great courage, acorns in a red pouch might be used. If aspiring to something that requires wisdom and flexibility, then acorns and ivy could be placed in a grey pouch.

There are no set recipes and every Witch will make up their own depending on their understanding of the correspondences and the effects these have on them.

Charging a Herbal Charm

As seen in the ceremonies for the solstices the pouches of herbs are taken in hand and concentrated on. Words are then spoken over the charm and directed towards them with a wand or athame. Other Witches may consecrate the pouch using salt water left over from the Opening of the Temple, or leave them out to charge by the light of the Moon. Quite what is done is up to you, but is important to do something, for this imprints in your mind that the pouch and its contents symbolise something significant and valuable.

Over the next few weeks, have a go at making up some herbal charms that are appropriate in helping you with a desire you may have. Remember, their function is to reinforce the taking action over an intention. Without action on your part nothing will happen.

End Blessing

With this lesson you are now entering a phase of learning that will really broaden your appreciation of the interplay between our Earth and the Sun's light and the importance that the seasons have to all our lives. These ceremonies will give a new dimension to your practice as a Witch, for they will enrich the whole of your years.

In the name of the Goddess and the God, may you ever walk a joy filled path!

Blessed Be

In Love and Light

And see you next lesson!

Notes

[1] It will be remembered from Chapter 2 that this was introduced into Wicca by the Farrars in their work *Eight Sabbats for Witches*.

[2] The Gregorian calendar was decreed by Pope Gregory XIII on 24 February 1582. Its years are numbered from the supposed birth date of Jesus Christ using the Latin *Anno Domini* (the year of our Lord). It replaced the Julian Calendar that was slightly too long, causing the vernal equinox to slide backwards in the year.

[3] On this interesting point see

<http://scienceworld.wolfram.com/astronomy/SummerSolstice.html>.

[4] Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough, A History of Myth and Religion*, one volume edition, Chancellor Press, 2000, p. 622. Material in this section of the lesson has been drawn from Frazer's chapters on the fire festivals, see pp.609-58.

[5] John's feast day (June 24th) was placed directly opposite the eve of the birth of Jesus (December 24th). This ensured that both solstice celebrations were firmly linked to the life of Jesus, for it was John who baptised him.

[6] Frazer, *Ibid*, p.625.

[7] Kupalo was the male counterpart of Kupala, a Slavic goddess of herbs, sorcery, sex and midsummer.

[8] These cultures have been named the Windmill, First Wessex and the Beakers. An article on the monument's history can be found at <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.1914>

[9] At the bottom of some of the stones have been discovered stone age tools and bones placed there by whoever built one of the phases of the monument around 2,500 BCE. This pre-dates the Druids who inhabited the British Isles from the second century BCE.

[10] For those Wiccans who are interested in the Kabbalah, the Sun is the planet associated with Tiphareth, the Sephira of the Archangel Michael and the Holy Guardian Angel through which the divine may be approached.

[11] This event is broadcast live over the Internet, see www.maeshowe.co.uk/.

[12] Pictures and articles about Newgrange may be viewed here <http://www.knowth.com/newgrange.htm>.

[13] See Frazer, op.cit., p. 358.

[14] Frazer, op.cit., p. 468.

[15] The religion was brought to Rome around 68 BCE by Cilician pirates who had been captured by the Roman general Pompey the Great; it rapidly spread throughout Italy and the Roman provinces.

[16] Mithraism had many features that were to be found later in Christianity. It extolled the virtues of humility and brotherly love and featured baptism, the rite of communion, the use of holy water, the adoration of the shepherds at Mithra's birth and the adoption of Sundays as holy days. Further, its followers believed in the immortality of the soul, the Last Judgement, and Mithra's resurrection.

[17] For more on this see Janet and Stewart Farrar, *A Witches' Bible*, Phoenix Publishing Inc, pp. 137-9 and Frazer, op. cit. pp. 358-61.

[18] See Frazer, op. cit. pp.636-8.

[19] At this time of year, figurines of the baby Jesus are easy to come by and could be used. Some will be averse to doing this, preferring to eschew anything to do with Christianity. However, if one views the figure merely as that of a generic representation of the infant God the symbol makes perfect sense within a Wiccan context.

[20] One of the attractions of Wicca is that its festivities have avoided the gross commercialisation that other religions have suffered. Any gifts do not have to be costly and can be home made.

[21] Similarly, many Wiccans object to the amount of paper wasted on wrapping presents. If done with flair, newspaper and old magazines can make fantastic alternatives to commercially printed paper.

[22] The *piñata* idea came from Chantal Santos, my wife.

[23] Great sources for correspondences are Scott Cunningham's, *Encyclopaedia of Magical Herbs* and Aleister Crowley's, 777.

[24] Ever wondered why hospitals make such use of green on their walls in the UK? It is because most people find the colour calming and healing. Similarly, schools tend to use neutral colours on their walls because lurid colours excite young minds to the point where they are unable to concentrate. Whether these outcomes are down to scientifically explained vibrations or psychology matters little; the effects are real.

Appendices to Chapter7

Appendix One: A Possible Midsummer Ritual for Covens or Families

With a number of Witches present the ceremony can be made more dynamic. Each Witch could bear a glass jar containing a candle and spin in a *deosil* (Sunwise) direction as they enter in the circle. These can then be placed on the ground in front of them.

After the Opening of the Temple the High Priestess and Priest could act out a symbolic coming together, where he is Lord of the Greenwood/ the Sun and she is the Divine Mother of Plenty. Costumery and props could be designed to reflect these roles.

A possible sequence of events might include the following:

The High Priestess stands in the centre of the circle near to the cauldron, which could be filled with seasonal flowers and nearly ripe corn.

The High Priest, wearing a crown representing the Sun, circles her, round the edge of the circle, while the coven chants. Something suitable might be:

*"Phoebus our Lord, bringer of the light
Shine on the Goddess with all of your might!"*

Slowly, he could spiral inwards getting ever closer to the High Priestess and the cauldron. When he reaches her they can embrace symbolising the Earth receiving the full power of the Sun's light. She could present him with a small sheaf of corn. The coven could then fall silent while everyone contemplates the importance of the interplay between Earth and Sun.

Each member present could then say one thing that happens at this time year. For example:

"Our crops ripen in the Sun."

"We have long days and short nights."

"We spend days at the beach."

And so on.

Once every member has said one thing, the High Priest can begin to spiral away from the High Priestess.

The coven could then perhaps chant something similar to:

*"The Sun starts his fall, the light moves away
Nights will grow longer and shorter our days!"*

Once the High Priest has rejoined the main circle, the High Priestess can pronounce:

"Now!"

All coven members would then blow out their candles. This is a powerful reminder that although the Sun is at his height, there has been a change in the cycle of Life.

The High Priestess might then say some words about this.

It is important, though, that this occasion is not left on a sombre note. The fact remains that the Sun is at his apex.

Passing round a box of matches in a Sunwise direction each covener relights their candle and the High Priestess begins a chant which all can join in:

*"Shine sun shine
Shine with all your might
Short the hours of darkness
Long the hours of light!"*

Once all candles are lit the coven can then spin in a circle holding their jars. At a suitable point the High Priestess can then give a signal that the chanting should stop and pronounce that the main part of the ceremony is over.

The cakes and ale can then be consecrated and enjoyed.

Appendix Two: A Possible Midwinter Ritual for Covens or Families

Before the coven enters the room one member should be curled up in the centre in a foetal position underneath a shroud (if working as a family this could

be a child). If the coven possesses a large enough cauldron this person could be curled up inside of it. They represent the Sun about to be re-born and, as such, could be dressed in suitable head gear or costume.

The coven enter bearing unlit candles (again having these in glass jars is a good idea) and form a circle around the individual. They then place their jars on the floor in front of them.

The Opening of the Temple proceeds as normal.

The High Priestess and Priest act out a sequence of events that leads on from those at midsummer.

These might include the following events:

The High Priestess stands in the centre near to the covered individual on the floor. The High Priest, wearing a crown to represent the Sun, stands next to her. He then begins to circle around, ever widening his path until he is moving at the edge of the circle. All the while the coven chants. Something suitable might be:

*"The belly of the Goddess round and tight
The young infant God, bringer of the light."*

When the High Priestess judges the time is right, she gives him a signal to stop. At the same time the coven should cease to chant.

The High Priestess then bends down and gives a kiss to the infant Sun lying on the floor.

Gradually, she helps this person to their feet and says something like:

*"Behold! From me the Sun is re-born!
In these our darkest days, the light has been re-kindled!"*

At this point each Witch takes it in turn to light their candle.

The High Priest then says:

*"Hurrah for the new born Sun!
Hurrah for the God's re-birth!
Praise be to the Goddess!"*

Light there be on Earth!"

The High Priestess then leads the representative of the infant Sun round the coven members, who give the person a kiss. This ends with the High Priest so that the new and old Sun stand together within the circle.

This concludes this part of the ceremony and the cakes and ale can now be consecrated.

Chapter Eight:
The Lesser
Sabbats, Part Two
- The Equinoxes

The Lesser Sabbats, Part Two: The Equinoxes

Merry Meet and Welcome to the Class!

In this lesson you will learn about:

The two annual equinoctial celebrations.

Continuing on, there is a research project for you to complete.

There are also further magical exercises for you to work on.

Finally, there is a blessing.

Introduction

The spring (or vernal) and autumn equinoxes are the remaining two dates for rituals that are collectively known as the Lesser Sabbats. Like the solstice festivities, these too are based around the cycle of the Sun, yet here the events celebrate the fact that day and night are in perfect balance. The equinoxes represent a key time in the tide of life, for in the spring the days will continue to get longer and warmer, whilst in autumn they will get shorter and colder.

What Exactly is an Equinox?

The equinoxes occur at the moment when the Sun appears to cross the celestial equator. If the Sun is rising above this line then the vernal equinox has taken place, if it is dipping below then the autumn equinox has occurred. These events happen around the 21st of March and the 22nd of September [1] each year. Obviously, when the spring and autumn equinoxes occur in one hemisphere, the opposite season starts in the other.

We will now look at each equinox in turn.

Spring Equinox

At this time of year trees begin to bud, flowers begin to bloom and the crops in the field poke their heads from the ground. The Sun rises ever higher into the powerful Sign of Aries [2] and the Goddess Earth starts to clothe herself in all manner of shades of green. It is the mating season in earnest where the March hare is perhaps the most notable symbol of boundless fecundity. Most commonly, of course, the period is associated with the Christian festival of Easter and the commemorations of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus that happen after the equinox takes place [3]. Even Christians can't resist the Pagan overtones of giving each other chocolate eggs, symbolising the world poised to burst into life.

Perhaps of all the festivals, the spring equinox is the one that has the greatest variance in Wicca. This may be because there are scant written historical records of such events having been celebrated in Britain [4], the birth place of modern Witchcraft. As we shall see, some Wiccans prefer to base their practices around the goddess Eostre, whilst others have gone further afield for their inspiration and look to the South East of the continent or outside of it. Still others, whilst acknowledging the validity of these elements, incorporate material from the *Gardnerian Book of Shadows*.

Eostre or Ostara

The only Pagan celebrations, of any sort recorded as happening at roughly this time of year in the British Isles, are written of in an obscure passage by a seventh century chronicler known as the Venerable Bede [5]. In *De Tempore Ratione (On the Reckoning of Time)* he stated that the early Anglo-Saxons had a month called:

“Eosturmonath...which was once called after a goddess of theirs named Eostre, in whose honour feasts were celebrated in that month” [6].

This has been widely accepted by the Wiccan community as proof that a goddess of such a name existed [7], and has been coupled with the assertions of Jacob Grimm in his nineteenth century collection of German myths and oral

histories called *Deutsche Mythologie* [8]. Grimm speculated that a number of place names in Germanic lands were derived from the worship of a goddess known as Ostara, a name that is etymologically similar to 'Eostre' (many Wiccans point out that Eostre is possibly linked to the goddess names Ishtar and Astarte as well [9]). Grimm also listed a number of customs associated with the goddess including the Ostern Hare and Ostara eggs. The evidence for these assertions was patchy and relied heavily on Grimm's inferences. Nonetheless, he was able to conclude that "Ostarâ, like the AS. [Anglo-Saxon] Eástre, must in the heathen religion have denoted a higher being, whose worship was so firmly rooted, that the Christian teachers tolerated the name, and applied it to one of their own grandest anniversaries" [10].

Today some Wiccans use Eostre as the central figure of their spring equinox ceremonies, where she is strongly associated with fertility, hares and spring vegetation. Other elements commonly included in her worship are an awareness of the events within the farming community, where crops are either sprouting or still being sown. Modern myths have also grown up around Eostre, such as the charming tale of how she was saved by a bird whose wings had become frozen by the cold of winter. Through magic the bird turned into a hare that could also lay eggs. In some senses it matters not at all whether this figure has historical validity, all goddesses and gods are to an extent symbols that aid expression of particular values. The key-note here is the bursting forth of life and the modern conception of this goddess more than adequately reflects this.

Gods and Goddesses from Outside of Europe

There are a variety of gods and goddesses that originate from Egypt and Western Asia that can also be drawn upon when celebrating this time of year. Osiris, Adonis, Tammuz, Attis and their consorts Isis, Aphrodite, Ishtar and Cybele are all deities from these regions that are familiar to many Witches.

The above gods are all sacrificial vegetation deities that represent the yearly cycle of decay and revival, which they show through their death and resurrection.

The goddesses, on the other hand, are really representative of one Great Maternal deity [11]. The rites of spring in a variety of Western Asian cultures seem to have incorporated the common themes of the sacrifice of a god-figure and the sanctified mating (and sometimes prostitution) of women with a variety of lovers.

Some of these events could be decidedly bloody. There was a myth that Attis killed himself by impaling his genitals upon a pine-tree. In Phrygia during the celebrations of his death and resurrection those who were his priests would self-castrate when entering the service of Cybele his lover/mother. Later, when the goddess was adopted by the Romans [12], the rites of Attis (March the 22nd-24th) became increasingly orgiastic over the ceremonial period, culminating in the Days of Blood where it appears that the priests would mutilate their genitals and bash them against an image of Cybele. This giving up of masculinity seems to have identified the priests with the fate of the god, as well as somehow having been a way of ensuring that the goddess was impregnated with life-giving energy. This perhaps explains why other goddesses such as Artemis of Ephesus and Astarte of Hierapolis were served by eunuchs [13].

Whilst the extremes of these rituals saw men castrated in the name of a goddess, women seem to have given up their bodies. For example, in Cyprus they were required to prostitute themselves to strangers at the sanctuary of the goddess Aphrodite or Astarte before marriage. In Babylon, regardless of whether a woman was rich or poor, she had to sell herself at least once at the temple of Ishtar and give her earnings to the service of the goddess. Similar practices also took place at Heliopolis and Baalbec in Syria, whilst at Byblus women were given the choice of shaving off all their hair or having sex with unknown men during the mourning period for Adonis [14]. Not always was this sex with strangers, sometimes priestesses would couple with monarchs of city-states in a *hieros gamos* or sacred marriage, as happened in the Sumerian temple of the goddess Inanna. Both participants would have believed that through their union fertility was ensured for themselves, their people and their country. Apparently men and women throughout the realm would try for a baby at the same time, in the hope that there

would be winter births when people were away from working on the land. Through this device the populace was then more able to give attention to their offspring during what would have been a very dangerous stage of life.

Practices such as these were believed to ensure that plants and animals could be aided to reproduce, for these unions on Earth would somehow stimulate the goddesses and gods to mate as well. At root sympathetic magic was being worked.

Mars, Demeter and Persephone

As a corollary to the above section, it might as well be to mention that Mars, Demeter and Persephone are notable omissions in Wiccan celebrations that would make excellent candidates for inclusion into the festivities of the spring equinox [15].

The Roman god Mars was celebrated Europe-wide and has obvious connections to the month of March, but he is strangely all but ignored by modern Witches. Presumably this is because Mars is traditionally known as a god of war and Wiccans are peace-loving creatures. However, he had three aspects, including that of the wood and cattle god Silvanus [16] who was consort of Diana [17], a very familiar goddess to Witches. Further, their joining can also be considered a *hieros gamos* ensuring the fertility of the land [18]. As if this wasn't enough reason to rehabilitate Mars to the month that is named after him, the astrological connection points to the fact that he should be, for Aries, the sign of the spring equinox, is ruled by his planet.

Perhaps stranger still, for a religion with such a feminine slant, is the lack of mention of Demeter and Persephone in this season. Persephone's capture by the Lord of the Underworld and her subsequent temporary release into daylight is an allegory of the seasons appropriate to the equinoxes [19]. This was certainly the view of the Ancient Greeks at Eleusis who used this myth as part of the lesser mysteries taught during the spring [20] to students deemed suitable for the first stage of revelation.

Elements from the *Gardnerian Book of Shadows*

In the *Gardnerian Book of Shadows* it states that during the ritual of the spring equinox “The symbol of the wheel should be placed on the altar upright, decked with flowers, flanked with burning candles” [21]. This suggests a link with the solstice fire festivals, where the burning of a wheel that was set in motion down a hill-side was common place. How far this was a genuine part of any ancient Pagan celebration at this time of year may be debated [22], but the fact remains that a wheel is a potent symbol of the cycle of life and is entirely appropriate to use in a ceremony marking one of its key turns.

Another feature, often borrowed from the same work, is the High Priestess’s carrying of a phallic or pinecone-tipped wand [23], used to emphasise fertility, as well as her ultimate power over masculine forces that must be excited by her if the land is to be fertilised.

Spring Equinox Ceremony

Having discussed many of the sources for inspiration for this ceremony let us now see how they may be put together. As with all the ceremonies that are given in this work, this is only one way of doing things. There is absolutely no reason why you should not make up your own, using the one in this book as a basis if you so wish. The important thing as always is to know why you are doing certain things.

It should perhaps be stated at the outset that the vast majority of modern Wiccans do not believe that their ritual acts ensure fertility on Earth, and none partake in the barbaric acts described above. The ritual is much more about giving thanks for the return to life of the Goddess and the growing strength of the God.

The altar can be decorated with seasonal flowers such as crocuses, hellebore, primroses, daffodils, tulips and hyacinths. The altar cloth could be of a fresh yellow, green or sky blue –all colours associated with the spring. A symbol of the Sun (or wheel) should be on the altar, as well as a phallic wand (a pine cone on a

stick is ideal). If using a cauldron place this in the centre of the circle space and put a live plant within it (not cut flowers).

Perform the Opening of the Temple as usual.

Pick up the Sun symbol hold it aloft and say words similar to:

“The Sun now enters the Sign of the Ram. His light shines brightly on our Great Mother Earth. She begins to clothe herself in shades of green and be-jewel herself with flowers of many colours. Persephone has returned and the God now runs free in the woods.”

Next pick up the pine-cone wand.

“The mating season has begun; female and male are now entwined, around us all things pulsate with life.”

Walk over to the cauldron that contains the plant. Touch its leaves and say:

“The Great Mother brings forth life from her womb. I connect with her energies that run through all things”.

A couple of lessons ago you learnt how to project your consciousness into a wand or athame. Do the same now with the plant. See yourself within it, at one with its leaves, stem and root. Look out through it upon the world. Feel yourself attuned to its vitality. Know that you, it and nature are all part of the same great wheel of life.

Chant:

*“Sun and Mother both always one
Mother and child, energy runs.”*

When you feel the time is right partake of cakes and ale. Some Wiccans like to bake hot pentacle or pentagram buns for the occasion, which make a great alternative to the Christian hot-crossed variety eaten around this time of year.

Finally, take down the temple.

Please Note: In the appendix to the lesson will be found ideas for coven or family celebrations of the equinoxes.

Autumn Equinox or Mabon

*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend to the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatched-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er brimmed their clammy shells.*
From *To Autumn* by John Keats

As the spring equinoctial celebrations are all about life on the cusp of bursting forth, so the autumn festival is about life poised to go into repose. The days and nights are of equal length, straw is safely stowed away in the barn for the winter season, the corn stubble has been burnt, apples have been picked from the trees and grapes and blackberries are being brought in. All that remains is to give thanks for the year's produce as the Sun crosses the equator and enters in the sign of Libra [24]. Aleister Crowley referred to this event as the true meaning of the crucifixion; from this point on our fiery orb would apparently die only to resurrect triumphant at the midwinter solstice [25]. The dates of the equinox fall firmly in the Celtic Tree Calendar's vine month of Muin and the plants spiralling tendrils serve to remind us that the dying of the light is but a part of life's eternal cycle.

Often Wiccans refer to the autumn equinox as Mabon [26], a name which suggests a Celtic antiquity, but the fact is that the usage of this epithet is down to well known Wiccan author Aidan Kelly who first used the term in the 1970s [27]. Like the spring equinox festivities, evidence of a specific autumnal equinoctial celebration from a Pagan past is difficult to find. The one exception to this is the Greater Eleusinian Mysteries that focused on Demeter's grief at the descent of

Persephone into the Underworld, as well as the realities of life after death [28]. As previously remarked though, Wicca seems to have all but ignored this genuine rite from Ancient Greece, which is a pity as the seasonal allegory perfectly expresses the cycle of life.

This is the time of year when the Horned God begins to lose his strength and virility. There is a famous example of a surviving dance of horned male figures in early September at Abbots Bromley in England [29]. That this dance is ancient has been revealed by the carbon dating of the reindeer antlers carried by the dancers. These date back to around 1060 CE and were probably imported from Scandinavia [30]. In all, six people bear horns; three of which are black, and three which are white. The remaining six dancers incorporate a violin playing musician, a man in a dress acting the role of Maid Marian, a Hobby-horse, a Fool and two children (one who carries a bow and arrow and the other playing a triangle). Quite what the dance represented has been lost in the mists of time, although it can be conjectured that the colouring of the horns may represent day and night in balance, the presence of Maid Marion may be representative of a goddess figure and the Hobby-horse and bow and arrows seem to be symbols of a hunt. Yet no-one can state these things with certainty [31].

The Archangel Michael is also present around this time of year, for his feast day is at the end of September. He is widely regarded as the Archangel of Fire and Light. It is perhaps surprising that he is remembered in autumn, when the day is being steadily overcome by night. But, in a sense, he may be viewed as going down into the depths and confronting the darkness, from where he will rise victorious again in the spring. He can be considered, therefore, as analogous to the Wiccan understanding of Lucifer, the light bearer, who falls to Earth to bring enlightenment to the world.

A satisfactory goddess figure for this time of year can be provided perhaps by Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruit trees. According to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Pomona's suitors included Silvanus (see above), Pan and Vertumnus, god of changing seasons and gardens. Among the guises Vertumnus used to win her

heart were a reaper and a vine-dresser, both occupations that are carried out in the autumn season. He speaks the words “There is no death -no death, but only changedeath / Is but to cease to be the same” [32]. With an eye on the future dark days ahead, such a line seems wholly appropriate to the time of year.

Autumn is a time when the world begins to prepare itself for the winter months ahead. The Sun is still with us but in a few short weeks the days will become noticeably much shorter. It is a time to thank the Goddess for her bounty and an opportunity to send the Sun off with blessings. The weather is still likely to be good and this ritual should be performed outside if at all possible. As Keats’s poem *To Autumn* states, this season is typified by produce such as blackberries, apples and gourds. All of these may be used to decorate the ritual space. Pine cones can also be arranged in a bowl and put on display, as well as a variety of nuts and fallen leaves. Here in Italy, we make use of grapes freshly plucked from our garden vine and instead of ale we drink grape juice that we prepare ourselves. Some Witches like to make use of a Yin-Yang symbol to show that light and dark are in balance, others hang spiral decorations of intertwining silver and gold, or black and white around the temple. As this time of year is on the cusp between Virgo and Libra, symbols may also be present of both figures. A set of scales is an obvious choice echoing the balance between hours of light and darkness, while the Virgin can be represented by a sheaf of corn not that long ago cut from the fields.

Perform the Opening of the Temple as usual. As Michael’s feast day is nearly here it can be a good idea to say a few extra words while invoking his presence, if you are using the Archangelic system and not the Guardians of the Watchtowers.

What happens next is very much up to you, the following structure is a suggestion:

Turn your back on the altar as if about to proclaim to the world. Next give thanks for all the good things that you have received from nature over the past year. Things to include might be grain from the land, fruit, vegetables, days out in nature with your family and so on. Then give thanks for the inspiration that the Goddess and God have given you over the days of light since spring. What has

your religion inspired within you over this time? What things have you been better able to do because of it? How precisely you do this is entirely up to you, it could take the form of a poem, a reading, a song or something spontaneously thought up on the spot.

Next, turn and face the altar as if addressing the Goddess and the God and say some words about what they are about to go through at this time of year. If you wish, you could use the poem below.

*"Persephone has descended to the dark realm below
Where even her Mother is fearful to tread
The leaves on the trees will slowly turn brown
While the land all around will prepare now for bed.*

*Up in the skies the bright one still shines
But even he must begin his decline.
Down to the depths of the dark night he goes
Joining the Goddess in the kingdom below.*

*Fire and Water, Air and the Earth,
Months now will pass before his re-birth.
Demeter she weeps for her daughter unseen
And the land all around us now loses its green.*

*Persephone has entered the dark realm below
Where even her Mother is fearful to tread
The leaves on the trees will slowly turn brown
While our Goddess, the Earth, prepares for her bed."*

Next pick up a basket of nuts, pine cones and leaves. At this time of year all these things are beginning to fall from the trees. After reciting the poem above, walk round the circle's edge scattering these objects upon the ground (another good idea for doing the ritual outside). As you do this, be conscious that what you are doing is, in fact, sowing the seeds and nutrients that will sprout the following

spring. Last year at Magicka School we used tomatoes from our garden (and why not? These fruits are still on the vine in late September). This spring we were amazed to see scores of seedlings sprout in a circle where the ceremony had taken place.

Then say a prayer for the Goddess and God entering on their journey into the dark realms, recognising that as they leave they have sown the land for the year to come. Try making up some suitable words yourself.

As always, the ceremony can end with cakes and ale and the closing ritual.

Research Project

As has been made clear in the main body of the lesson, the equinoctial celebrations are not generally based on any single actual surviving ceremony from a Pagan past. Wiccans have synthesised a range of ideas from a variety of sources. Each author, or tradition, has their own personal preferences and no-one can give you a definitive equinox ritual. Because of this, it is a good idea for you to go away and find your own material for these celebrations that mark an important stage in the cycle of the year. Below are listed some possible starting points, which you can follow should you so wish.

Make a study of nature at the time of the equinoxes that is based on your own locality. To facilitate this you could join a local rambling group or take an herbal course that deals with seasonal herbs.

Find out if there are any local customs that take place around the time of the equinox. Dare I say it; the local Christian church can be a good place to start in the British Isles and Europe, as many local Christian practices have their roots firmly planted in Pagan tradition. For example, the church local to me when I was a child had a Saxon door with iron work that represented a mythical story about sea-dragons that was told every year around the spring equinox by some of the church elders.

Another good place to start is to look in local libraries. Try to find out what deities were worshipped locally in the past, and what customs sprang up around them.

More broadly, delve into any goddesses or gods such as those mentioned in the lesson. See what you can find out about Persephone and Demeter, Ishtar and Tammuz, Attis and Cybele or Silvanus and Diana. Perhaps, too, look into the Eleusinian Mysteries more closely.

When you have done all of this you will have a really solid basis upon which to design your own celebrations, or, if you don't want to do this, you will at least

have a great understanding of the background to Wiccan rituals at this time of year.

Exercises

Psychic Balance and the Veil Between the Worlds

Traditionally at the equinoxes, the veil between the seen and the unseen is felt to be thin. This belief is rooted in the fact that the whole of nature is poised between the height of summer and the depths of winter at these times and, whether we consciously realise it or not, we tend to follow the light and begin to change our behaviour depending on whether summer or are winter are coming. The equinoxes are times when our whole psyche is at a fulcrum point between the days of light and the days of dark. Because of this fact, our whole beings are in a state of expectation and heightened awareness, and this makes this time of year especially useful for developing psychic abilities and practicing arts that rely on psychic skills.

In the following few paragraphs, a range of exercises are given that can be carried out at anytime of year but which will be more efficacious at the equinoxes.

Developing Intuition

All of us have moments of uncanny intuition that even the most hardened scientist has difficulty in explaining. The most striking of these are often centred round very emotional events such as the death of a close relative, friend, or even pet, when specific visions of an impending disaster come to mind. Yet there are also many common instances of knowing exactly what will happen next, such as when you know what someone is about to say, what will happen next on the television or who is about to ring you. Other sensations are vague and can be of the “I feel uneasy about...” or, “I feel just great about....” variety. The fact is that nearly all of us depend on our intuitions to get us through life to a greater or lesser extent. It may be that many of these “feelings” are down to our brain subconsciously evaluating a situation (although this doesn’t explain the type of experience where a niece knows that an aunt, who was in seemingly perfect health, has just died thousands of miles away, or the boy who is at school and knows the

family dog has been run over). Witches readily accept that the brain is a subconscious guide and seek to develop its powers in this respect.

One of the simplest ways to do this is to keep an intuition diary. Over the next few weeks have a go at recording every time you had a hunch that something was going to happen. Write down the times when you were correct and the times that you were wrong. You can then examine your results. What kinds of feelings did you have? Did you get specific images, did you get certain emotions? Was the feeling vague and difficult to define? Over what kinds of things were you right in your intuition? What kinds of things were you wrong over? Can you see a pattern?

Over time, you will know what kinds of things your intuition can be most relied over, and what kind of responses you are most likely to have. You can then use this information to expand your capabilities. Say, for example, that you get vague feelings of either negativity or positivity about a thing or an event. Next time this happens, try to examine yourself a little deeper, what emotion do you feel? What can you see will happen next? By doing this regularly you will find that your intuitive skills develop. You might never get full-on visions but you will no longer have to rely on vague notions.

You may find, as well, that your intuition is great in some circumstances and lousy in others. Some people find they are very intuitive at work and then barely at all at home. If this, or something similar is the case, your diary will have revealed the pattern and you are then in a position to do something about it. You might want to sit down and unpick why it is your intuition flows in one place and is unable to function in another.

Prediction Skills

Another way of developing intuition is by using a series of objects and predicting what will come next.

Take a pack of Tarot cards (ordinary playing cards can be used just as well). Pull out the Major Arcana (or the court cards if using playing cards) and put the others to one side. Shuffle the cards. Hold them in your hand face down.

Concentrate on the card on the top. Feel its energy, what might it be? Decide and then turn the card over. On a piece of paper, record one point if you were right and no point if you were wrong. Repeat the process until you have worked your way through the cards.

Some of you may find that you score over ten. Typically, you will score five or even less. Do not worry if your score was this low. As always, with all that you learn, it is important not to allow yourself to feel failure or give yourself the sense that somehow that you are under achieving. All you did was gain a mark that you desire to improve, nothing more.

Attempt this exercise periodically. Of course, the temptation will be to immediately have another go and do better than last time – if this is the case try to resist, here is a golden opportunity to educate your mind that life isn't all about competition. As you will no doubt by now have learnt, magical skills only develop over time and cannot be forced.

Psychometry

Another skill that you might like to have a go at developing is the art of taking an object and seeing what feelings you get from it. Of all the branches of magic this is one of the most ridiculed. Many outside the occult community will point out to you that when scientifically examined all practitioners have an extremely poor success rate, statistically no better than chance. Others explain that so called psychometrists often ask questions as they hold an object and pick up on reactions of those nearby, such as a spoken response or a shift in body language. To this must be replied that yes, under laboratory conditions, the evidence shows no-one has ever done better than chance. That said, however, nearly everyone has had an experience when they have had an experience when they have touched an object and had good or bad feelings from it, and some have visions of varying degrees and clarity.

One of the most effective ways of developing this skill is to get a close friend or relative to supply you with a few objects, one or two of which should have

special emotional significance (avoid obvious choices like rings). Hold them in your hands, move them around. Can you tell if these objects have good, bad or neutral associations? What were they used for? On what occasion were they given to the person? And so on. As you do this, try not to ask questions. If the person agrees, it may even be best if they leave the room and you work alone.

Over a period of time try this for several people who you trust not to make fun of your attempts. This is very important. You need to have people who will support you during your fledgling attempts. At the end of each session make sure that you record your experiences as honestly as possible. After a while, you will be able to use this record to judge for yourself if you have frankly no gift in this art, or if you have a success rate that appears to be developing.

End Blessing

Congratulations, you are now two thirds of the way through the course. You have done a terrific amount of learning over the last few months and you can feel confident that you are becoming an extremely well educated Wiccan.

Begin to really have a go at adapting the ceremonies given in the lessons or even write your own. You now have enough knowledge to be doing this for the Lesser Sabbats.

The next two chapters will give you a really solid grounding in the Greater Sabbats. May these rituals stay with you throughout your life, and deepen your appreciation of everything that surrounds you.

Blessed Be,

In Love and Light,

And see you next lesson!

Notes

[1] The vernal equinox can be as early as March 19th or as late as March 21st. Similarly, in September, the date ranges from September 22nd to September 24th. The variations are caused by the interplay between common and leap years. Many Wiccans celebrate the autumn equinox on the 21st of September.

[2] Of course, for those in the Southern hemisphere the Sun will be falling into autumn.

[3] The Easter date is set from the ecclesiastical vernal equinox, which is always the 21st of March. Commonly it is supposed as the first Full Moon after this date, yet this is not strictly true for the Full Moon in question is an ecclesiastical Full Moon, which is not the same as an astronomical Full Moon.

[4] There does, however, seem to be some archaeological evidence for pre-Celtic celebrations among Megalithic peoples, see <http://www.megalithicsites.co.uk/penrhiwen2.html>.

[5] Bede (c. 672 – 735 CE) was a Benedictine monk at the Northumbrian monastery of St Peter at Wearmouth. He is famous for having written the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, the fullest surviving historical record for the period.

[6] Bede, *De Tempore Ratione*, chapter XV, “The English Months”.

[7] Not everyone is happy with Bede’s attribution of Eostre-monath to Eostre. Professor Ronald Hutton in *Stations of the Sun*, Oxford Paperbacks, 2001, writes that the name meant simply ‘the month of opening’ or ‘the month of beginnings’.

[8] Grimm (1785-1863) was a German philologist, most famous for his collection of fairy tales that were produced with his brother. *Deutsche Mythologie* is a rare book, long out of print. An electronic copy may be obtained here: <http://www.greatworkspreserved.com/teutonic/index.html>.

[9] See, for example, the Farrars’, *A Witches Bible*, p.75.

[10] In actual fact, the church named their festival of Easter after the month Eostre-Monath and not the goddess, who may or may not have existed.

[11] Such anyway was Frazer's conclusion; see *The Golden Bough*, One volume edition, Chancellor Press, 2000, p.331.

[12] In 204 BCE.

[13] Frazer, op. cit., pp., 347-9.

[14] See Frazer, op. cit., p.330.

[15] As far as I am aware, in none of the "standard" Wiccan texts will be found festivities based around these gods and goddesses at this time of year. For example, they are not to be found mentioned in the Farrars' *Witches' Bible*, Starhawk's *Spiral Dance*, Cunningham's *Wicca for the Solitary Practitioner*, Crowley's *Wicca* or Buckland's *Complete Book of Witchcraft*.

[16] The other two aspects being Gradivus, god of war and Quirinius, god of the Roman state.

[17] See Frazer, op. cit., pp. 140-1.

[18] Frazer, *ibid*.

[19] Interestingly, even though the best known version of the story is of a goddess trying to save her daughter from the Lord of the Underworld, there are other versions where Persephone captures the nature god Adonis as a baby and refuses to let him surface from the Underworld. His lover/mother Aphrodite has to descend to the dark realms in order to bargain for his release, see Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p. 327.

[20] The greater mysteries were taught in the autumn.

[21] The spring equinox ritual can be found here: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/gbos/gbos28.htm>

[22] See the Farrars, *A Witches' Bible*, pp 75-6. They believe it to be a genuine survival.

[23] Gardner may in turn have got this from the Priapic wand named after Priapus, Roman god of fertility.

[24] Again, those in the Southern hemisphere will of course be celebrating the start of spring.

[25] As noted in Chapter Two of *Wicca Revealed*, see Aleister Crowley, John Symonds and Kenneth Grant ed., *The Complete Astrological Writings*, 1988, p.42. The Sun crosses the equator at the autumn equinox and dips below it, which can be seen as a kind of crucifixion.

[26] Mabon was a figure from Welsh mythology; he was the Divine son of Modron the Divine Mother.

[27] See the Wikipedia article *The Antiquity of Mabon* at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mabon>. Kelly created the NROOGD (New Reformed Orthodox Order of the Golden Dawn) branch of Wicca; his article on the subject may be read at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Reformed_Orthodox_Order_of_the_Golden_Dawn. This is Kelly's own article and whatever one thinks of the general reliability of Wikipedia, it is, in this case, from the horse's mouth.

[28] The Greater Eleusinian Mysteries involved bringing sacred objects from Eleusis to the Eleusinian temple at the foot of the Acropolis in Athens, bathing in the sea, sacrificing a pig, a procession commemorating the fact Demeter was made to laugh in her grief by an old woman, a fast in honour of Demeter's search for Persephone and a central secret event that historians speculate was about eternal life.

[29] Those that want to find out more about this spectacle should visit the events official website at <http://www.abbotsbromley.com/horndance.htm>.

[30] It is not thought there were any native reindeer in Britain in the C11th.

[31] The most rational explanation offered is that the dance commemorates a grant of hunting rights to certain villagers.

[32] Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book 15, "The Doctrines of Pythagoras", ln.72-5.

Appendix to Chapter 8

Instead of giving you a full blown ceremony for covens or families I hope you have been given enough information and inspiration to create your own should you wish. Therefore, in this appendix, I will only provide some pointers about things that you might like to consider when planning a ritual that involves a group.

Some people enjoy planning with others. If working in a coven it is usual for both the High Priestess and High Priest to work out details together and sometimes the whole coven can be involved. When working as a family it is often a powerful bonding experience if everyone brings their own ideas and that these are incorporated into the ceremony.

Think about how the ritual space will be decorated and how the group will be involved.

What props and costumes might be needed, if any? Some Wiccans make wonderfully crafted implements and robes for these events. Others prefer hardly any accoutrements at all.

How will the Goddess and God be represented? Decide which goddesses and gods will be used and what things are appropriate to symbolise them.

What will the overall structure of the ritual be? Ceremonies should start with the Opening of the Temple, but from there on in what happens is entirely a matter of choice.

What prayers and chants will be said and who will say them? Published prayers and poems can be used, although often those you have made up yourself are just as good.

What ritual movements will there be? How will the whole group be meaningfully involved? This is important to think about. Wicca is not a spectator sport and all Witches will expect to be involved in a ritual.

Will there be a need to rehearse the ceremony before hand? Some Wiccan groups feel being properly rehearsed means everyone knows what they are doing

and that when this is the case dignity for the occasion is ensured. Others prefer spontaneity. When making this decision it is probably best to think of what a group needs, rather than your own personal preference.

If all these factors are considered, you will find that designing your own rituals will be a rewarding experience.

Chapter Nine: The Greater Sabbats, Part One - Imbolg and Beltane

The Greater Sabbats, Part One: Imbolg and Beltane

Merry Meet and Welcome to the Class!

In this lesson you will learn about:

The Wiccan celebrations Imbolg and Beltane.

Continuing on, there is a research project for you to complete.

There are also further magical exercises for you to work on.

Finally, there is a blessing.

Introduction

The Greater Sabbats of Imbolg, Beltane, Lughnasadh and Samhain [1] are seen as the most important Wiccan festivals and are also known as the Cross Quarter Days. This term refers to the fact that they lie between the equinoxes and the solstices.

Whilst the Lesser Sabbats can be seen to be mainly about the cycle of the Sun, these celebrations are more about the cycle of life on the Earth and are a way of honouring the different stages of the seasons. Although it should be stated that Earth and Sun, Goddess and God, are intertwined throughout all the eight Sabbats.

As we have seen, the equinoctial celebrations had no ancient lineage within the British Isles and Wicca has borrowed from cultures based in the Mediterranean. With the Greater Sabbats, Gerald Gardner was able to base his writings and practices on events that had long taken place within the land where Wicca was born. The typical names of the celebrations give away the source; they are in Gaelic, the language of the Celts [2].

Imbolg, February 1st or 2nd

*Down with the rosemary and bays,
Down with the mistletoe;
Instead of holly, now up-raise
The greener box, for show.

The holly hitherto did sway;
Let box now domineer,
Until the dancing Easter-day,
Or Easter's eve appear.*

From *Ceremonies of Candlemas Eve* by Robert Herrick (1591-1674).

Imbolg, also known to Witches under the Christian name of Candlemas, is one of the prettiest festivals of the year. The Goddess is just beginning to poke her shoots of green up from Hades' depths, you can hear bird song after five o'clock in the evening for the first time, and the Sun has a wonderful delicate fresh light. Both Goddess and God are in their infancy and bring to the land many new things.

The word Imbolg or Imbolc, derives from the phrase *i mbolg* which means "in the belly". It was (and is) a time centred on the first signs of spring and the lambing season. Indeed, its alternative name of *Oimeic* means "ewe's milk", referring to the onset of lactation that typically takes place from mid January to mid February.

Originally one of the four great Celtic fire festivals, it was later to be Christianised as St Brigid's day, celebrated on February 1st. Brigid was herself probably based on the Celtic goddess Brigit. She is often seen as having two sisters, also bearing the same name, making her, in effect, a Triple Goddess. She had governance over all things which rose up high or that elevated the soul. She ruled flames and fire, hill-forts and mountain tops, wisdom and intelligence, poetry and the craft of the blacksmith, healing and skilled warfare (a thing admired in Celtic society) and the art of Druidry.

Her most familiar symbol is that of the Brigit's Cross (also called Brigid's cross, Brighid's cross, or *Crosóg Brigde*). This is an object generally made from rushes and

sometimes straw. It has four arms that emanate from a square centre and is reminiscent of a fylfot (similar to a *swastika*) sun wheel, hinting that it was probably originally a symbol of this type. Even today these are a common sight in Celtic lands; most especially in Ireland where a folk belief persists that Brigit's Cross will protect a house from fire. Celebrations and rituals for Brigit typically took the form of welcoming the goddess into the homestead with the idea that fertility would be ensured for the coming months ahead. For example, on the Isle of Man, people would gather green rushes and stand in their doorways, holding them whilst saying:

“Brede, Brede, tar gys my thie tar dyn thie aymys noght. Foshil jee yn dorrys da Brede, as lbig da Brede e beet staigh”, which translated means “Bridget, Bridget, come to my house, come to my house tonight. Open the door for Bridget and let Bridget come in” [3].

The rushes are of course phallic symbols and the call to come in is an invitation to be impregnated. This was echoed in the Hebrides, where a family would dress up a sheaf of corn in female clothing and then lay the doll in a basket that contained a wooden club [4].

Other Pagan festivities from this month emphasised purification as a means to ensure fertility. Indeed, the word February derives from the Latin *februare*, meaning “to purify”. Perhaps most significant of the festivities and rituals centred on this theme was the Roman Lupercalia, which had as its aim the success of crops and animal husbandry, as well as the general prosperity and welfare of the people.

The festival was celebrated near the cave of the Lupercal [5], just outside Rome, from where Romulus and Remus, the founders of that city, were believed to have been suckled by a she-wolf. Goats and a dog would be sacrificed and it may have been that originally the sacrifice was human. The skins of these animals, known as *februa*, were then cut into strips and these were used by priests to whip girls and young women around the walls of the city. Strange as it may seem to us today, this was believed to ensure fertility and make child birth easier. There is also a theory that suggests that the origins of St Valentine's Day [6] come from this

festival, as lovers would have paired off to make the best use of the sexual license at this time.

As well as fertility and purification, February was also traditionally a time to renew protection of one's home and well-being. The seventeenth century poems of clergyman Robert Herrick, show that this aspect of Pagan celebrations survived happily in Christian England. His poem *The Ceremonies for Candlemas Day* speaks of how the Yule log would be relit and then saved to light a new log the following Christmas, with the object of keeping a home from harm:

Kindle the Christmas brand, and then

Till sunset let it burn;

Which quench'd, then lay it up again,

Till Christmas next return.

Part must be kept, wherewith to tend

The Christmas log next year:

And where 'tis safely kept, the fiend

Can do no mischief there.

As well as vestiges of these old Pagan practices, the modern festival of Imbolg has some distinctly Christian overtones provided by the celebration of Candlemas. In 494 CE this event replaced the Lupercalia, when Pope Gelasius created a feast of the Purification of the Virgin, also commemorating the presentation of Jesus to the temple. The chief feature of the ceremony used to be the lighting of candles on February the 2nd [7] and it is probably from this practice that the use of a multitude of candles in the Wiccan celebration derives [8].

Imbolg Ceremony

During this period the altar, or even the whole house, can be decorated with symbols appropriate to the themes of a desire to see the land green and fertile and fresh light emerge. Obviously candles will be present in abundance but it can also be a great idea to make or find Brigit's crosses, as well as Moon and Sun symbols.

If snowdrops or early crocuses are out, these can also be arranged on the altar in vases or poesies. Perhaps, too, symbols of the last remnants of winter can be displayed as farewell is bid to the season of cold. Snowflakes could be made from paper, and, if the real substance is still lying on the ground, this can be brought in and left to melt in a chalice and used during the ceremony. As this time of year is one of new beginnings and purity, the altar cloth could be of white, as if it is a slate wiped clean, or a new page about to be written. Two orange candles can be placed on top; orange being a colour representative of light that has not yet grown strong.

Before the ritual, take a cleansing bath using any herbs of purification; sage and salt are ideal. As you lie in the water concentrate on letting your worries, doubts and fears flow out of your body. Visualise them as small, indistinct and drained of colour. If they have a soundtrack, mentally turn down the volume. This is important; we often have the habit of making things that bother us as big and possible in our minds. No wonder, then, that they are difficult to remove from our heads. Use relaxation techniques that you have learnt so far on the course, especially the use of breathing patterns. You may want to make up a gentle chant or prayer as well. Continue with the bath until you feel calm and peaceful. Make sure that you have a fresh robe to get into afterwards [9].

In your sacred space perform the Opening of the Temple.

Next light the two orange altar candles and say something to the effect of:

“The new light is growing, it is fresh and pure, and gently it warms the Earth. New life emerges; buds begin to swell, and the first green leaves push upwards from the ground. Lambs and young birds can be seen in the fields, the cycle of life continues.

As all life is re-born my mind is as well. I am ready to face the world afresh. I look towards the future and the new choices I can make to create a better place for myself and those all around me.”

This linking of one’s mental state to the seasons, and embodying it in ritual, is an incredibly powerful thing to do, as it gives a real opportunity for renewal.

Often we can become stuck in the past and unable to move on. Here, though, acknowledgement is made that one period is over and a new one begun. As life renews itself so can you; a fresh outlook creates a happier environment that positively affects both mental and physical health. Say:

“I give thanks to the Goddess who stirs powerfully beneath the last trappings of winter. I give thanks to the God who daily grows in strength. All things are influenced by their forces. My inner light grows within; I am ready to face the world anew.”

Pick up one of the orange candles, sit down in the circle and place it on the ground in front of you. During the ritual bath you allowed your colourless cares and worries to slip away from you. Now you must fill the void with light. Gaze deeply into the candle. As you can see a flickering flame in front of you, visualise a flame that burns deep within your solar plexus.

It lights up the cavern within and fills you with hope and the possibilities of new beginnings. This flame can never die. It is your constant companion and friend, it is the spark of life that when nurtured can do incredible things. Spend some time knowing that you have this immortal part to you, visualise it sending warmth and light around the whole of your body. See it extend down to your finger tips and up to your eyes, nose and mouth. When you are ready, see this energy crackle out from you. See it pouring into your environment. Know that as the light is within you, it can be made to pour forth, so that it influences your surroundings for the better. Extend this energy as far as you are able, until you feel it is the time to stop. Gradually draw the energy back into you, back deep within your body and mind.

You may well find this exercise tiring and it is a great idea, therefore, to make sure that you eat some Imbolg cakes [10] and have something to drink before taking down the circle.

Many Witches make a point of lighting up the whole house with candles or lanterns on Imbolg day; some will do this at dawn and dusk, while others opt

solely for the evening. This simple ritual is a lovely way to give a little boost and salutation to the light within and without.

Please remember, though, to think carefully about the positioning of candles.

Beltane, May Eve

*Come queen of months in company
Wi all thy merry minstrelsy
The restless cuckoo absent long
And twittering swallows chimney song
And hedge row crickets notes that run
From every bank that fronts the sun
And swathy bees about the grass
That stops wi every bloom they pass
And every minute every hour
Keep teasing weeds that wear a flower*

From *May* by John Clare (1793-1864)

Beltane was an ancient Gaelic festival, celebrated at around May Eve [11] in Ireland, Scotland, and the Isle of Man. However, it was not a general Celtic festival as Wales, Brittany and Cornwall did not celebrate it as such, but instead carried out similar events around this time of year. Beltane has recently been revived on a grand scale and, currently, is perhaps the most popular of the Cross Quarter Day celebrations, especially in Scotland where upwards of 15,000 people gather to party in honour of the start of summer on Calton Hill in Edinburgh [12]. Wiccans acknowledge and use a variety of sources from a range of cultures in their Beltane celebrations, and do not generally take an exclusive Gaelic approach.

Traditionally, the end of April and beginning of May would have been the time of year to drive cattle to their summer pastures. It was a period when a whole community united in working on the land and were concerned to ensure the

fattening of the herd and a good harvest later in the year. In cultures all over Europe, villagers would go out into the woods and perform a variety of popular customs that appear to have been ancient vestiges of tree worship, where it was believed that the spirit of the tree would keep the village inhabitants, as well as their crops and animals, from harm. For example, in Northern England young people would go into the woods blowing horns on May Eve at midnight and come back laden with branches and flowers that they fastened over doorways and windows of their houses at dawn. In France, boys would go out singing carols for which they were rewarded with a drink. They would then plant a small tree or branch in the ground in front of the house they had just visited. Whilst in Russia, a birch tree would be cut down and dressed in women's clothes or ribbons and paraded through the streets [13].

Masculine and feminine are closely intertwined at this time of year, which has forever been a season of mating. One of the most widespread customs, centred on this theme, was the bringing back of a tree trunk that was erected in the heart of the village. On one level this was an obvious phallic symbol, around which the young unattached men and women of the village would dance, holding on to the ribbons until they became interwoven with their prospective partners. New relationships were created, leading to marriages later in the year that strengthened ties within and between communities. Even today the May Pole is a familiar site in many countries around the world.

The figures of the May Queen and May King were also common place in many locations and would have been understood to represent the spirit of vegetation. In Halford, in South Warwickshire, children went round the village led by a Queen and King. A May Pole draped in greenery and flowers was carried by two boys in front. Various houses were stopped at, whereupon songs were sung in return for money, which they then used to have tea at the local school. In the South East of Ireland, a girl was chosen to be the May Queen and crowned with wild flowers, in her honour there would be a day of feasting and dancing, followed by a grand procession. She would hold office for a year, during which time she would preside

over dances and parties for young people. With ceremonies such as these the whole of Europe would celebrate the start of the summer.

The lighting of bonfires was another key celebratory feature. In Ireland for example, on the Eve of Beltane, fires would be lit atop mountains and hills. The greatest of these was reserved for the hill of Uisneach, “the navel of Ireland”, situated in what is now County Westmeath. The fire of Bel, the Celtic god of light, could be seen to impregnate the land. Similar fires were made all over Europe, again with the idea of ensuring that the new fertility of the land would mean a successful harvest.

Coupled to these practices, there has always been something a little anti-establishment about this time of year. It was a period of re-invigoration of the populace and the overturning of old values, where the figures of the Green Man [14] , Robin Goodfellow [15], and more especially Robin Hood, showed the way to a change in the pace of life and the means to undermine those who held the reins of power. The Church and State, perhaps unsurprisingly, frowned upon these celebrations throughout much of Europe. Not only were they subversive of the values of the Church, but of the established order of society. Both May Day and the May Pole were outlawed in the Puritan influenced England and America in the 1600s, and in Europe the Catholic Church also sought to suppress these joyful and anarchic rites. And yet, the traditions would not be cowed and still carried on in many rural areas.

Beltane Ceremony

How then can we draw together these elements of fertility, light, the interplay of male and female, and a sense of the anarchic into our Wiccan celebrations? First, and perhaps foremost, at this time of year the weather is likely to be good, and, if at all possible, this celebration begs to be performed out of doors; a clearing in a wood is perfect, or even underneath a tree in a garden is a good location for this ritual.

The altar should be decorated with seasonal flowers and possibly small branches from trees [16]. Hawthorn, white-thorn or mountain ash are particularly suitable choices. The May Queen is also known as the White Queen and blooms of this colour are ideal. Statues of the Goddess and God could be in evidence, or, alternatively, figures of the May Queen and May King could be made. Some Witches opt to use the kinds of candles that are of a man and a woman locked in an embrace, aptly symbolising the union of male and female.

If a cauldron is owned, this can be put in the circle centre with kindling and dry wood. Later it will be lit, symbolising the light penetrating the Earth, like the celebrations written of above on the hill of Uisneach.

Before starting, herbal charms can be made with which to decorate the tree during the ceremony; leave these also on the altar. As learnt above, many of the customs harked back to tree worship and a belief in tree spirits who could help ensure success. Today, some Witches believe in such entities and others don't - either way, hanging charms upon a tree to aid the accomplishment of a desire is a symbolically powerful thing to do, and all Witches will recognise this.

Perform the Opening of the Temple as usual.

If you wish you could start with a chant:

*"The Lord from above, the Lady below
Gaining in strength, together they grow.
Shine from above, push from below
The Lord and the Lady, together they grow."*

When you judge that the time is right, walk over to the cauldron and light the fire within. Say:

"The Light within has grown stronger, the Earth responds and turns to shades of green. Life has burst from every quarter, rich in diversity we hear its myriad calls. Great Goddess and God we call upon you to show us how to nurture and protect such precious gifts, show us how to cherish and appreciate all that you so freely give."

Meditate for a while on the light within the cauldron. Realise that such a flame burns brightly inside of you, know that you are at one with the Goddess and the God.

Again, when you are ready, walk over to the altar and pick up one of the herbal charms. Take it in hand and proclaim aloud the intention for which it was made, hang it upon the tree. If several have been created, repeat the process. When working as a coven or group this can be especially powerful, as each Witch present voices an intention in front of his or her peers and publicly hangs the charm onto a branch.

Say:

*“Charms have been made, intentions been set,
Our Lady and Lord ensure these be met.
The fires within burn bright through these days,
The magic of summer will with us now stay.
So mote it be!”*

A feast of early summer foods can now be enjoyed.

Research Project

As was made clear last chapter, the notes given in the lessons are only guidelines and suggestions. It is sincerely hoped that you have been finding out more about Wicca on your own and are beginning to form your own ideas about what things should be included in the ceremonies. If you don't like something dreamt up in this work, then put something in place that is better to your liking. Witchcraft is perhaps above all else a creative religion. There is no dogma, no Holy Writ that must be followed to the letter. Use your imagination.

At the same time, though, make sure you know why you are doing certain things. All magical practice is generally at its most successful when it is done for a genuine reason. As with the ceremonies above, the elements they incorporate are there because they are in tune with age old practices and the tide of the year. It would be no good, for example, decorating the altar with snowflakes at Beltane (unless you lived in truly extreme Southern or Northern climes) as it is simply inappropriate. Use things that reflect the moment in time.

Similarly, those who work in covens should think along the same lines. Don't just rush out and buy a copy of *A Witches' Bible* and then use the ceremonies as if they were carved in stone; much better to read such material and then come up with your own practices.

This way of thinking is a radical departure from most other religions that will tell you things must be done in a certain way. Sadly, this can even creep into Wicca. Yes, there are some individuals and groups of Witches who will tell you that many things *have* to be done in a particular fashion. Whilst this may be true and reasonable to a point within a tradition (where it would no longer be a tradition if everyone did their own thing), one of the joys of being eclectic, or solitary, is that you can do more or less as you please.

Over the next month spend some time finding out more about Imbolg and Beltane using the leads given in the main part of the lesson.

Again, you could have a go at designing some of your own rituals, or, if you don't feel comfortable doing this, think about prayers and words of your own that you might say to substitute my suggestions.

You could enter these into your Book of Shadows, where they can be easily found when the time is right and used during your own celebrations.

Exercises

Ritual Baths

In the Imbolg ceremony you were introduced to the idea of ritual bathing. This type of cleansing has been featured in many religions from all over the world and throughout history. More than just an exterior cleaning, the idea behind it is to rid your self of unwanted or negative energies that clog up the mind as well as the body and tend to hinder magical work. As this type of bathing is a ritual it can be made more effective by giving it a meaningful structure.

Usually ingredients are added to the bath water. These add to the sensate experience but their properties are also often absorbed through the skin and have certain physical effects on things such as blood flow and inner bodily heat. Quite what these additives are will depend on the work in hand. The table on the next page gives just a few suggestions of common options, but the more that you find out about herbs and essential oils, the more you will be able to experiment for certain effects.

Please note: Those who are pregnant or suffer from sensitive skin should consult with a qualified medical practitioner before using herbs or essential oils in baths.

Bath Additive	Property
Sage	Excellent herb of purification.
Peppermint	Powerfully stimulative. Good if you want to heighten perception or will perform magic that requires exciting the mind. Not to be used by pregnant women or those with sensitive skin.
Lavender	Protective and calming. Not to be used by pregnant women.
Ylang Ylang	Creates a sense of arousal. Again good for magic that requires a stimulated mind and body.
Thyme	Lifts the spirits and purifying. The essential oil should be well diluted and never used neat (a safer option is to use fresh leaves). Best avoided by children and those who are pregnant.
Kelp or Bladderwrack	Stimulative, balancing and purifying.
Rosemary	Similar to peppermint. Pregnant women may wish to avoid using it.
Bergamot	Calming. Great for inducing a sense of peace.
Sea Salt	Purifying. Absorbs negative energies. Good for the skin too.

Any herbs to be used are probably best contained in a little net bag. This will allow their properties to flow into the bath but make it easier to clean up when the bath is finished. Some people like to burn incense and, if you wish to do so, prepare a censer and some matches before hand. Others like to light candles. Another nice touch can be to play some relaxing meditation style music. It goes without saying, though, that all electrical equipment should be well away from water and not touched when you are wet [17].

There are in fact many meditative techniques that can be used during a ritual bath and a standard method is given below.

Light the candles and then put out the lights. Fill the bath with water and add any herbs, essential oils or salt. With your hand, wand or athame draw an invoking pentagram of Water [18].



Notice that all the Elements are present during this ritual. Fire is represented by the candles, Water by the bath, Air by the incense and Earth by the herbs. Surrounded by these Elements, climb into the bath. As you lie down in the water let your self relax. Using a breathing pattern here may be of help. Next visualise a clear blue light above your head. See it gently spinning and pulsating. Watch it in your mind's eye for a while. Bring the light gently into your head, your neck and your shoulders. As you do so, consciously relax your face muscles and allow the tension to dissipate from your shoulders. Draw the light further down your body, each time relaxing the places that it travels through. It should flow down your arms and through your fingers into the water, down through your chest, your stomach and sex organs, down through your legs and out from your feet.

You will find that if you repeat this two or three times that a wonderful sense of relaxation will come upon you.

Cleansed from all tension and worries, you now have a calm space upon which to think about a coming ritual or piece of magical practice. Your focus will be sharper and your will more effective.

When you judge the time to be right, release the water from the bath and, as you do so, see all your anxieties, fears and tensions drain away down the plug-hole.

If you wish you can then do a blessing. This one is from the *Gardnerian Book of Shadows*:

“Blessed be thy feet, that have brought thee in these ways.

Blessed be thy knees, that shall kneel at the sacred altar.

Blessed be thy womb (phallus), without which we would not be

Blessed be thy breasts, formed in beauty

Blessed be thy lips, that shall utter the Sacred Names” [19].

If desired, this can be easily adapted to include other body parts as well such as the eyes and the mind.

Over the next month or so, experiment with a number of ritual baths and herbal and essential oil combinations; see what works for you. Most importantly, try and combine the baths with a ritual or some other magical work. Can you see a positive effect? Has your experience of magic been enhanced? As always, make sure that you record what you have found, for only by doing this have you got an accurate record against which to base any future changes that you may wish to make.

Chakras

The word chakra derives from Hindu culture and is usually explained as an energy centre that exists within the human body. During your studies you will come across a variety of different theories about chakras, and here are given only the most commonly held ideas and definitions.

In general, it is considered that there are seven chakras [20]. These are thought of as being aligned in a column from the base of the spine to the top of the head. Their role is to draw in universal life force energy, or *prana*, to maintain spiritual, mental, emotional and physical health of the body through balance.

The chakras are associated with physiological functions, aspects of consciousness and colours. They are generally understood as giving life-force to the Physical Body and are places where physical, emotional and mental energies interact.

The seven chakras are:

1. Sahasrara

Also known as the crown chakra. It is the wheel of consciousness and the chakra that controls all others. It is usually symbolised by a thousand petalled lotus and represented by the colour ultra-violet.

2. Ajna

This area is also often referred to as the third eye. It is the chakra of light, awareness and time, and is shown by a lotus with two petals. It is represented by the colour indigo or violet.

3. Vishuddha

The throat chakra is linked to growth and communication, and is symbolised by a sixteen petalled lotus and the colour blue.

4. Anahata

Also known as the heart chakra, this area is related to love, balance and a sense of well-being. The chakra is shown by a lotus with twelve petals and the colour of leaf green.

5. Manipura

This chakra is situated at the solar plexus and is related to energy and digestion. It is symbolised by a lotus with ten petals and the colour yellow.

6. Swadhisthana

Also known as the sacral chakra, this energy centre is located in the groin, and linked with emotion, sexuality and creativity. It is shown by a lotus with six petals and the colour orange.

7. Muladhara

This is the base or root chakra and is linked to survival, the need for security and the desire to reach one's potential. The Muladhara Chakra is shown by a lotus with four petals and the colour red.

Some texts on chakras refer to them as being a type of energy that emanates from the spiritual and gradually becomes physical or concrete, finding rest

eventually in the Muladhara chakra. Comparisons can be drawn, therefore, between this and other emanative systems; in magical theory the link most often made is with the Kabbalah [21].

Many who work with chakras believe that the energy of creation lies sleeping in the base of the spine in the form of Kundalini energy (often visualised as a coiled snake). This energy can be awoken and caused to rise back up the chakras and achieve Union with the Divine in the Sahasrara chakra.

Now you know something about the chakras, you can try the Bands of Colour meditation. Through the colours that are visualised, it is possible to re-balance the energies of the body and improve physical, spiritual and mental health.

Bands of Colours

Light a candle in the meditation space you have chosen. Breathe in for nine, hold for seven and breathe out for nine, this is known as one cycle. Repeat this breathing pattern for a few minutes. You will now perform the Bands of Colour, where you will imagine that sections of your body are bathed in different hues. Try to hold the visualisation for each colour for two cycles (that is breathe in for nine, hold for seven, breathe out for nine and repeat) if this becomes too difficult do not worry, just concentrate on the images of light:

1. First imagine that your body from your feet to your knees is coloured a rich deep brown.
2. Next see that the colour above your knees fades from a rich to a light brown.
3. Now visualise your genital region as being a deep red. Feel life pulse through this region.
4. Gradually the red fades to a comforting orange as it moves up your body to the region from your pubic mound to your navel.

5. The orange now gives way to a beautiful swirling golden colour that gently whirls around your solar plexus. In this moment and in this place, concentrate on feeling safe and well, whatever your worries that are outside of this time.
6. Move up now to your chest. The colour changes to a vibrant and healthy green that strengthens and invigorates the structures of your heart and lungs.
7. The healthy green now changes to a marvellous light blue that is clear and flowing. Feel it move up over your throat and lower jaw.
8. The blue now changes to a pleasant indigo-violet that bathes the top part of your head.
9. Imagine directly above you that there is a ball of intense white light that energises and protects you.
10. Slowly draw down this light into your body. Let it flow into you in the region of your third eye, in the centre of your forehead.
11. Imagine that it has now travelled to your throat and creates pulsations within the flowing blue.
12. It continues down to your heart and your lungs. From there, feel its energy coursing through your blood stream.
13. Next it reaches your solar plexus. See the intense white light mix with the swirling gold.
14. Gradually allow the light to seep back up through your body, back up from your heart and lungs, back up from your throat, back up through your head and, finally, out through your crown. See the intense white light above you.
15. Become aware of your breathing again. Repeat the pattern of breathing in for nine, holding the breath for seven and breathing out for nine. Come to normal consciousness, feeling both refreshed and calm.

Record your feelings and impressions in your journal. Over the next month use this meditation quite frequently. As you do so, consciously think about how you are balancing your energies and pay particular attention to parts of your body that

don't feel right. At these points be especially careful to visualise strongly the correct colour. You will find that over time an area of a body can be made to feel much better [22].

End Blessing

Congratulations, you are now very nearly through the course -three quarters of the way through to be precise! By now you may well be feeling a little tired. As was said right at the start, to truly be a Witch can be a demanding process. But you are nearly there, so please keep up the great work.

Try both the ritual bathing and chakra exercises. Both will have a profound impact on your life and the quality of your religious and magical experience.

May you go forever blessed in the light of the Lamp Eternal.

Blessed Be,

In Love and Light,

And see you next lesson!

Notes

[1] As has been mentioned elsewhere, the names of these celebrations have variants, some of the common ones are given in the table below:

Imbolg	Beltane	Lughnasadh	Samhain
Imbolc	Bealtaine	Lammas	Halloween
Immolg	Bealtane		
Oimeic			

[2] Although Gardner's rituals have been the basis for Gardnerian and Alexandrian practices, there are newer traditions that have based their celebrations on other cultures. For example, Raymond Buckland created the Seax-Wicca Tradition and based his ideas on Saxon religious beliefs.

[3] Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough, A History of Myth and Religion*, Chancellor Press, 2000 p.135.

[4] Frazer, *Ibid.*, p.134.

[5] The most famous example of the Lupercalia festival is from 44 BCE. The Lupercal, or cave of Lupercus, had fallen into a state of disrepair until it was rebuilt by the Emperor Augustus (63BCE-14 CE).

[6] St. Valentine's feast day was created by Pope Gelasius I in 496 CE.

[7] This was the original practice during the Christian ceremony but it seems to have become increasingly less popular.

[8] Many Witches will be surprised by this perhaps, but the symbolism of the lighting of candles at Imbolg is in keeping with the spirit of the season, and all Wiccans should feel perfectly comfortable using such items to celebrate the coming of the light.

[9] There is more about ritual baths in the “Exercises” section of the lesson.

[10] Those that wish to could use the following recipe:

1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour

3/4 cup water

3/4 cup sugar

1/4 cup vegetable oil

2 tbs. poppy seeds

1 tbs. grated lemon peel

1 tsp. baking soda

2 tbs. lemon juice

1/2 tsp. salt

powdered sugar

Preheat the oven to gas mark 5. Mix the flour, sugar, poppy seeds, baking soda, and salt with a fork in an ungreased 22cms x 22cms x 5cms (9”x9”x2”) baking pan. Stir in the remaining ingredients, except the powdered sugar. Bake for 35-40 minutes or until a knife inserted in the centre of the cake comes out clean, and the top is golden brown.

Remove from the oven and cool. Sprinkle with powdered sugar.

[11] Since the Celtic year was based on both lunar and solar cycles, historians conjecture that Beltane would most likely have been celebrated on the Full Moon nearest the midpoint between the vernal equinox and the summer solstice.

[12] More can be found out about this excellent event here: <http://www.beltane.org/>. The website includes a history of Beltane, definitions of key figures, and photos of the modern celebration.

[13] Frazer, *ibid.*, p.121-135. The work gives details of many such celebrations from all over Europe.

[14] The Green Man is perhaps best briefly described as a representation of a human-like creature of vegetation, covered in leaves and often identified as being divine.

[15] Robin Goodfellow is a name given to a mischievous and anarchic fairy or hob-goblin. At times, it has also been used as a name for the devil.

[16] Not every Witch is happy taking cuttings from trees, and some are actively opposed to the practice. If you are going to cut trees it should be done with care; never take much and don't cut thick branches down.

[17] Apologies if this seems as if you are being treated as a child, but such warnings have to be put in for legal reasons.

[18] Here the idea is to utilise the energies of the water so an invoking pentagram is appropriate.

[19] These are the words spoken by the High Priest during the Five Fold Kiss given to the High Priestess in the Gardnerian Opening Ceremony. The full text can be found here: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/gbos/gbos01.htm>.

[20] Some sources talk of five and others of eight.

[21] Those that want to find out more could start by reading the Ciceros' chapter "Yoga, Chakras, and the Wisdom of the East" in Israel Regardie, edited and annotated by Chic Cicero and Sandra Tabatha Cicero, *The Middle Pillar, The Balance Between Mind and Magic*, Llewellyn, 2003, pp.159-174. Also, see Figure 1 in the same publication for a diagram that combines the Chakras and the Tree of Life.

[22] The Bands of Colour formed part of my training many Moons ago. I have been unable to find who originally invented it. Please note as well, this is not a cure for an illness. Always consult a qualified medical practitioner if you suspect something may be physically wrong. It is true to say, though, that many report that meditations such as these have a beneficial effect on how they feel.

Chapter Ten: The
Greater Sabbats,
Part Two -
Lughnasadh and
Samhain

The Greater Sabbats, Part Two: Lughnasadh and Samhain

Merry Meet and Welcome to the Class!

In this lesson you will learn about:

The Wiccan celebrations known as Lughnasadh and Samhain.

Continuing on, there is a research project for you to complete.

There are also further magical exercises for you to work on.

Next you will find a reading list to help broaden your knowledge.

Finally, there is a blessing.

Introduction

The last of the two Greater Sabbats are Lughnasadh and Samhain. Traditionally both have a strong harvest theme for they range over the period from the reaping of the corn in July and early August, to the last of the apples and grapes from the vine at the end of October. Although the God is seemingly given prominence in this festival, most Witches would stress the interplay between both the Sun and the Earth in bringing forth the crops on which we all depend for our survival. For some Witches this is the period of the Holly King's rule, which marks the decline of the Sun's strength and the time when the Goddess bears forth her fruit.

Lughnasadh, 31st July

Lughnasadh is pronounced with just three syllables as "Loo-nus-uh", which means the "commemoration of Lugh" [1]. As with the other Cross Quarter Days it is a Celtic festival, going under the name of *Lumasdál* in Scotland, and *Laa Luanys* in the Isle of Man.

Lugh is a hero and god from the mythical past of Ireland. In much Wiccan literature, modern Witches will find him associated with youth, the Sun and healing, amongst other things. He can also sometimes be compared with the Archangel Michael [2], the bringer of light. He is perhaps most famous for freeing his peoples, the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, from the tyrannical Formorians, a rival Irish tribe.

Quite what the original Lughnasadh festivities celebrated seems lost in the mists of time, and today it is difficult to assert with confidence what shape the event would have taken. For example, it may have marked Lugh's military victories, or the death of Tailtiu, his foster mother [3]. One myth about Tailtiu relates how she died from exhaustion after clearing a space in a forest for the growing of crops, and requested instead of a funeral that martial games should be held in her honour [4]. So the story goes, Lugh established these as an annual event.

Whatever the truth and provenance of these happenings, the figure of Lugh seems gradually to have become a god of light identified with the grain harvest. As Robert Graves says "The Anglo-Saxon form of *Lughomass*, mass in honour of the God Lugh...was *blaf-mass*, loaf mass, with reference to the corn-harvest and the killing of the Corn-king" [5]. Lugh can be seen, therefore, as a kind of sacrificial vegetation deity, who dies so that we may live [6]. By way of symbolising this fact, some Wiccans will bake a loaf of bread in the shape of a man and "sacrifice" and eat it during the Lughnasadh festivities.

It is important to note that although the Celtic celebration centred round the figure of Lugh, the Celts did not celebrate the Sun when it was at its highest point. Theirs was a calendar based on the Moon and the Lughnasadh festivities would only have taken place at the Full Moon that fell equidistant between the solstice and the equinox. It can be conjectured that the influence of the Moon on the crops was as important to the Celts as the Sun [7] and, whether or not this was the case, it is still a clear indication of the need to worship the balance of divine masculine and feminine forces in their agrarian calendar. Modern Witches would,

of course, echo this fact, and almost any ritual [8] designed for this time of year acknowledges both the Goddess and the God.

Another sacrificial corn figure often used by Wiccans in their celebrations at Lughnasadh is John Barleycorn. As with Lugh, it is difficult to get at the origins of this character, who seems to be a personification of the spirit of the corn. He is famously enshrined in a song of ancient derivation [9] that many Witches use during their festivities:

John Barleycorn

*There were three men come out of the West
Their fortunes for to try,
And these three men made a solemn vow:
John Barleycorn should die!*

*They ploughed, they sowed, they harrowed him in,
Threw clods upon his head,
And these three men made a solemn vow:
John Barleycorn was dead!*

*They let him lie for a very long time
'Til the rain from Heaven did fall,
Then Little Sir John sprung up his head,
And so amazed them all!*

*They let him stand 'til Midsummer tide,
'Til he grew both pale and wan,
Then Little Sir John he grew a long beard,
And so became a man!*

*They hired men with the scythes so sharp
To cut him off at the knee
They rolled him and tied him about the waist,
And used him barbarously!*

*They hired men with the sharp pitchforks
To pierce him to the heart,
And the loader he served him worse than that,
For he tied him in a cart!*

*They wheeled him around and around the field,
'Til they came upon a barn,
And there they made a solemn mow
Of poor John Barleycorn,*

*They hired men with the crab-tree sticks
To strip him skin from bone
And the Miller he served him worse than that:
For he ground him 'tween two stones!*

*They wheeled him here and wheeled him there
And wheeled him to a barn,
They threw him rudely in a shiny vat
And John he tumbled down.*

*They have worked their will on John Barleycorn
But he lived to tell the tale;
For they pour him out of an old brown jug,
And they call him home-brewed ale!*

*Here's Little Sir John in a nut-brown bowl,
And brandy in a glass!
And Little Sir John in the nut-brown bowl
Proved the stronger man at last!*

*For the huntsman he can't hunt the fox
Nor loudly blow his horn,
And the tinker can't mend kettles nor pots
Without John Barleycorn! [10]*

Coupled to the idea of sacrifice, Lughnasadh is also often seen as a festival that has a strong theme of mating. Another tradition relates how, in early medieval times, Lughnasadh marriages were undertaken in honour of Lugh and his wife. These were nuptials that lasted for just a year and a day and could be annulled in the place where they had begun [11]. The eighteenth century poem, *Lammas*, by Robert Burns, shows that passions have always run high at this time of year:

*It was upon a Lammas night,
When corn rigs are bonnie,
Beneath the moon's unclouded light,
I held away to Annie:
The time flew by wi' tentless heed
Till 'tween the late and early,
Wi' sma' persuasion, she agreed
To see me thro' the barley.
Corn rigs, an' barley rigs,
An' corn rigs are bonnie:
I'll ne'er forget that happy night,
Amang the rigs wi' Annie.*

Lughnasadh Celebration

Before starting this ritual you may like to think of some ways that you can attune yourself with the spirit of this time of year. Many Witches like to get out into the harvest fields, and will take seasonal fruit picking jobs as they enjoy doing some manual labour outside in keeping with nature's rhythms. For city dwelling folk this can be something of a working holiday. Others will take their families into orchards and have picnics (make sure, of course, that you have asked permission of the landowner and cleared up afterwards if you are going to do this).

As we have seen above the theme of sacrifice runs strong through the mythology, where the corn gives up its life so that we may live. One of the things you might like to do is ask yourself what you can provide for the benefit of others. This need not be something huge; often the small services or kindnesses we do have the biggest effects. One idea might be to organise a sponsored walk through local footpaths. This can be done in conjunction with a local rambling society, who will be able to advise on possible routes. An eight mile walk designed for families, with a stop over picnic half way through, will not only be a great day out can be used to raise money for a local charity. Another nice activity is to organise a collection of produce, which is then distributed to those in need within the community. Not every Witch lives somewhere where they can be open about their faith, but these things can all be done without proclaiming to the world one's belief system. Not only will these acts benefit others, but they will help to strengthen and define your faith, as well as make this time of year more meaningful.

When decorating homes and altars it can be a good idea to use things that are reminiscent of the first harvest of the year. Sheaves of corn can be displayed. A loaf baked in the shape of a man and crowned with ears of corn can be used to represent the God, and the effigy placed on a platter (there is a recipe for making bread in the Appendix). The Goddess might be shown by a bowl of earth or perhaps even corn dollies. Seasonal fruits can also be put out, such as strawberries,

bilberries and early apples. A floral display could be made from poppies or cornflowers. A good colour for the altar cloth might be a sunset red, showing that the light of the God is still vibrant but in its decline; red is also a colour strongly associated with sacrifice. Those Witches who wish to use the figure of the Holly King may also want to place some leaves or twigs from this tree on the altar.

Perform the Opening of the Temple as usual.

Pick up a sheaf of corn. Hold it in front of you and say something similar to the following:

*“King corn now is dead,
Cut down by our scythes,
But his Spirit lives on and enriches our lives.
The Lord’s grain is pounded and made into bread,
Loaves that we bake will keep us well fed.
Thanks be to the Great God who gave up his life!
Praise be to the Goddess who ensures we survive!
King corn now is dead,
Cut down by our scythes,
But his Spirit lives on and keeps us alive.”*

Pick up the platter with the bread man on it. Using a bolline (or knife other than your athame) cut the bread into pieces. It is quite appropriate to spread on butter or even have a piece of cheese to hand if desired. Eat some of the bread and as you do so contemplate what this act symbolises for you. Think about what has gone into its production in terms of the interaction of Goddess and God forces, the action of the Four Elements, as well as how the grain was turned into flour and the whole bread making process. Today it is often forgotten just how important bread is to human beings of many different cultures and epochs. There have been periods in history where entire empires have been placed under threat when this staple food was unavailable [12] and even today, in countries that are poor, it is critical to the survival of many people.

Say:

"I consume this bread and as I do so I consciously connect with the energies that went into its making. Sown in the ground, watered from the skies, the grain strove ever upwards towards the light so that I may eat and survive. I give thanks for the fertility of our Goddess the Earth and the heat of the Sun. In harmony they provide all that I need. May the grain now be scattered in the four winds and find its resting place deep within the Great Mother, there to grow again in the many years ahead. So mote it be."

Any magical work that is pressing can now be undertaken.

At the end, there is time to enjoy the rest of the bread and any fruit that was displayed on the altar.

Finally, close the temple.

Samhain, 1st November

*The Hag is astride,
This night for to ride,
The devil and she together;
Through thick and through thin,
Now out, and then in,
Though ne'er so foul be the weather.*

*A thorn or a bur
She takes for a spur;
With a lash of a bramble she rides now,
Through brakes and through briars,
O'er ditches and mires,
She follows the spirit that guides now.*

*No beast, for his food,
Dares now range the wood,
But hush'd in his lair he lies lurking;
While mischiefs, by these,*

*On land and on seas,
At noon of night are a-working.

The storm will arise,
And trouble the skies
This night; and, more for the wonder,
The ghost from the tomb
Affrighted shall come,
Call'd out by the clap of the thunder.*

The Hag, by Robert Herrick

Along with Beltane, Samhain is perhaps the greatest of the Wiccan festivals and in the popular guise of Hallowe'en it is the one perhaps most often associated with Witches. Samhain (pronounced "sow-en", where sow rhymes with how) derives from an Old Irish word that may mean "summer's end" [13] and spelt as *Samhuin* is the current Gaelic word for November in the Emerald Isle.

For the Ancient Celtic peoples, the Samhain festivities marked the Celtic New Year and, traditionally, took place during the period of the Full Moon, nearest the midpoint between the autumn equinox and the mid-winter solstice. That this time was thought of as a period of new beginnings may have been because the Celts believed that the year was divided into a light half (heralded by Beltane) and a dark half, and that the year began in this darkness [14]. It was a period when the last of the harvests were in and stored, the herds would have been brought down from their summer pastures, closer to the settlements, and many would have been slaughtered and salted as food for the months ahead. If the harvest had been good, it would've been a time of joyous celebration, but, if it had been mediocre or poor, one can imagine that the Samhain festivities would have been distinctly marked by many prayers that the winter be not harsh, and that the food last until the spring. More often than not it would've been a time of uncertainty, difficult today for many of us to truly imagine.

Further, as the year plunged into darkness and the populace spent more hours in firelight than sunlight, there would've been an air of psychic tension created by

the sense of existing in a dark and mysterious time, where all was withering and dying, with only the distant promise of lengthening days. It may well have felt as if one was inhabiting a nether-world of dead souls, awaiting reincarnation in another form.

It would have perhaps been only natural to assume that as the cattle were brought in from the bleak, comfortless fields, the dead would come back to their homestead hearths to warm themselves by the fire, imbibe a hot drink or two and partake of some of the harvest food [15]. It is to this kind of ancient belief that the modern Day of the Dead celebrations and Christian All Souls' Day probably owe their origin, as indeed do Wiccan notions of how to celebrate those who have passed to the other side. During this festival period it is common for Witches to light a candle or a fire for those who have departed. They may display photos and personal artefacts of the deceased, and even leave out a drink and favourite cake or biscuit for them to enjoy.

Of course, it was not only benign spirits that were felt to be on the loose on Samhain night. Against the backdrop of the Full Moon all manner of fairies, Witches, hob-goblins, cats and dark horses were unleashed, to sweep across the land and create mischief and merriment in abundance. There was ample opportunity for telling tales of fantastic and terrible imagination that would only have added to the anxiety over the harvest stores and the emotions of remembrance for the dead.

With the veil between the seen and unseen so frail, the moment was ideal for the art of divination. The Celts used this time of year to take stock of the old and project forward to the new. What would happen in the coming months ahead? What would be their fate? For an agrarian people at the mercy of the whims of the Goddess, answers to such questions would have been urgent and important. Even today, where many Witches are cosseted by the modern world, it is undeniable that there is something in the air during these days; a feeling that the future is tangible. Quite how divination was carried out is uncertain, although there is some evidence from Northern Wales and Perthshire [16] to suggest that stone casting

may have been one of the methods used. Each family, or group of families, would have built a great bonfire. Once it had gone out the members would cast a marked white stone into the ashes, prayers were then said round the fire and all retired to bed. In the morning, should a stone be missing, it was supposed that the person it had belonged to would die. Today such a prophecy seems a little overly dramatic, but in Celtic society Death's icy hand would have been far closer than it is today, where the average lifespan would have been much shorter and infant mortality high.

There is also the suggestion that such fireside events may have originally identified a sacrificial victim who was likely killed in the hope that their death would ensure safe passage through the winter months. In Wales, for example, vestiges of such an act appeared to survive into the nineteenth century. When the Hallowe'en fire had died out completely, those watching would turn on their heels and run, shouting "The cropped black sow seize the hindmost", which can be taken to infer that at one time the slowest would have become a sacrificial victim [17]. That human sacrifice at this time of year was commonplace, may be evidenced by the fate of a number of Celtic kings in mythology, whose lives ended by being burnt alive [18]. And, if this is the case, it may be that the bonfire night of November 5th and the burning of effigies of Guy Fawkes [19] hearken back to a pre-history and go to show that even today there is a calling for a sacrifice, if only a symbolic one, during the dark days of November.

Indeed, it is interesting to note just how much need there is among many groups of people in "Westernised" countries for a festival at this time of year. So much so, that by late September, shops become awash in all kinds of plastic and rubber Hallowe'en novelties, supermarkets stock up with pumpkins and people begin to plan fancy dress parties. Despite the fact that we live in a world of incredible technology and a 24 hour culture, seemingly immune from the tides of the year, many of us still feel a deep need to mark or counter the descent into darkness with displays of excess and light. As if, almost somewhere underneath it

all, we know that the cycle of life and the rhythms of nature are what truly govern us and are, in fact, quite inescapable.

Samhain Celebration

Often it can be seen that there are two sides to the Samhain festivities. On the one hand there is a week of fireworks, bonfires, parties and dressing up that many Witches will throw themselves whole heartedly into. Whilst, on the other, there is a quieter time of ritual work in honour of the Goddess and God, as well as reflection in tribute to those who have passed. Some Wiccans take an either/or approach and choose one of these paths of celebration, and others will combine both.

Party Ideas

Many people love a good party and, if people in your local community know you are a Witch and are sympathetic towards Wicca, they might well naturally expect that you will do something special at this time of year. Others of you may belong to covens or have families and wish to have a more private but nonetheless festive time.

What about organising a fancy dress party? It is something that will be enjoyed by Wiccan and non-believers alike, as well as people of all ages. A good tip for a successful event is to give away a prize or two for the best costume and make sure that you put this fact on invites as it will encourage guests into the spirit of things. Another good idea can be to have party games. Breaking open a Witch's head *piñata* makes a great centre piece event, where contestants are blind folded and have to locate the *piñata* and attempt to smash it with a stick (the rules were given previously, in the lesson about the Solstices). Or how about bobbing for apples? Here you would place a bowl or tub half filled with water in the centre of the room and put in plenty of the fruit. Each player then takes it in turns to attempt to bite into an apple and lift it out of the water within three or four tries. You may

wish to have on hand several towels to act as bibs, and maybe put plastic sheeting down. Outside a bonfire can be lit, hot potatoes baked and soup served in mugs. The evening could then be rounded off with fireworks [20].

Remembering the Dead

A lot of Witches get great benefit from using this time of year in remembrance of friends and family who have passed to the other side. Telling tales of cherished moments spent within their company to others can be a great way of keeping memories alive. For a family this can be especially important, whether this be an opportunity for a younger generation to keep a place in their hearts for their forefathers and mothers, or to remember those of the same or younger age who have moved on. Handled sensitively, it can bring a family, group of friends or coven closer together. One of the ways to do this might be to share pictures or even movies. A portrait could be displayed over Samhain and a candle lit for the person as well.

Care should be taken with people's feelings though, individuals react quite differently to death and some in ways that may be quite unexpected. Special consideration should be given before sharing stories or images of someone who has departed, as those present may find things too painful. It can be a good idea to plan such an event ahead and privately ask those who will take part what they might like to do (or not do) during Samhain. In the research project of this lesson will be found a section on Wiccan attitudes towards death. Whatever your views, it is always a good idea to remember that others may feel quite differently and need a different approach during the festival.

Samhain Ceremony

The altar can be decorated with seasonal fruits and vegetables. Pomegranates are especially recommended here for they are linked to the Persephone/Demeter myth. Persephone ate pomegranate seeds in the Underworld, which in some

versions of the story was the event that meant that she was bound to spend part of her life in the depths with Hades. On one level Persephone symbolises the cycle of life; all things die but then all things must rise again. Other produce to include would be pumpkins, gourds, chestnuts and beets as well as autumnal flowers such as chrysanthemums and rose hip seed pods. Some Witches might like to use holly again as well. With the light now fading fast the altar cloth could be a pale yellow or orange. Similar colour candles can be used too. If you wish, it can also be fitting to have images of those who have passed that were important to you out on view. Sometimes Witches display these behind a net veil, showing that they are close but separate at this time.

In the centre of where the circle will be cast, place a cauldron or suitable metal container. Next to it put its lid (or a plate big enough to cover it) and a pomegranate. Light the candles at the four quarters as well as the altar candles.

Perform the Opening of the Temple.

Say words to the effect of:

"Today we bid farewell to the Sun, our fiery Lord has weakened and is now overcome."

Walk over to the East candle and extinguish it.

"Later and later will he rise in the skies, his heat now vanishes from the land."

Walk over to the South candle and extinguish it.

"He will travel alone through the depths of existence, where not even the Moon will join him."

Walk over to the West candle and put it out it.

"He is now gone from the land."

Walk over to the North candle and extinguish it.

For a moment or two contemplate the significance of the Sun's journey.

Now walk over to the cauldron. With your bollock cut open the pomegranate.

[21].

Eat some of the seeds and say:

“Over the dark winter months the Goddess provides for us.”

Next cut out the other seeds and place them in the cauldron. Say:

“Deep within the Goddess new life is stored and will grow again when the time is right.”

Cover the cauldron. Contemplate the significance of new life beneath the earth.

When you are ready, light the candle in the North, the direction representing midwinter, then the East candle, and so on.

Within the circle, now is a great time to carry out divinatory arts, or, if you wish, time could be spent remembering departed loved ones.

Finally, close down the temple.

Research Project

Attitudes towards Death

There is not a great deal of Wiccan literature about death. The reason for this is probably because Wicca is fundamentally a religion concerned with the here and now. Perhaps, because of this, it is hard to give a Wiccan perspective on death that will satisfy all groups of Witches. Indeed, a whole variety of opinions will be met with. In general, though, it is safe to say that most Witches believe in some sort of afterlife, be it on the spiritual plane or reincarnation.

This research project provides an opportunity to examine your own beliefs about death. What happens when someone dies? Of course, for some this will be too painful a subject and no-one should feel that they have to force themselves.

However, if you are willing to explore this subject here are some pointers:

- On Earth cycles within nature can be observed. How far are humans cyclic creatures do you feel? Does the cycle end with death or do we continue?
- Do we have a spirit? What is this spirit's nature? What does it do when we die?
- Do we reincarnate? If so, how and when? Do we reincarnate just as humans?
- If we reincarnate how is that mediums communicate with the dead? And how can we invite the dead back at Samhain?
- If we reincarnate, what is its purpose?

In *Wicca Advanced* there is much more about this topic in the second lesson of that course, where reincarnation is explored in some detail. For the moment though, rather than just accepting that the human spirit somehow recycles, you are invited to work out your own views.

Exercises

Choosing a Craft Name

You have very nearly completed the course. By now you have a very good understanding of what it means to be a Witch. Many feel that at around this stage a kind of re-birthing is being undertaken and it is natural to choose a new name that reflects the changes that have happened; there are others though who feel completely comfortable with the name they have and there is certainly no pressure to use a different one.

However, if you would like a new name there are many ways of choosing one:

- Some take their favourite Goddess or God name.
- Others use varying forms of numerology to create one.
- Some will cast a number of rune stones and use the English alphabetical equivalents to construct a name.
- Some use the name of a totem animal.
- Others use a fictional character's name.

At the end of the day, it is up to you how you come across your name. Mine, as you will doubtless know by now, is Pino Longchild. My wife calls me Pino, the Italian word for “pine”, as I am tall like a tree. I added “Long” emphasising my height (I am around 2 metres tall) and the “child” part is because I consider myself to be always learning with an open, young mind, despite being over forty.

What will you choose as your Craft name?

A New Working Tool

Along with a new name some Witches also like to make at least one new tool when they are at this stage of their studies. One of the easiest and least expensive to make is a wand. This will replace the wand that you have used so far, after the initiation ceremony. Others will opt for creating or buying a new robe, or maybe

making or purchasing a special piece of jewellery. Whatever you decide, you have worked hard to progress on the course and these outward shows of achievement can be an important way of showing to yourself, and others, that a change has taken place and a certain stage of development reached.

End Blessing

This lesson marks the end of the look at the seasonal celebrations. It is sincerely hoped that what I have written will inspire you to go away and carry out or create your own rituals and honour the Goddess and the God.

There are now just two lessons, or eight weeks to go, before you have completed the course. Are you excited? You have worked extremely hard to get to this stage, a big well done and keep it up.

May what you have learnt bring you closer to the rhythms of nature and help you find your place within the great wheel of life.

Blessed Be,

In Love and Light,

And see you next lesson!

Notes

[1] Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*, Faber and Faber, 1990, p. 301.

[2] Janet and Stewart Farrar, *A Witches' Bible*, Phoenix Publishing Inc, 1996, p.105.

[3] The assertion that the games were in honour of Lugh's foster mother is described as being "late and misleading" by Graves *ibid.*, p.302. It is also seen by Professor Ronald Hutton as a medieval construction, see *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles: Their Nature and Legacy*, Blackwell, 1993, pg. 178. Nonetheless, a belief in its ancient provenance will be met with in much Wiccan literature, especially on the Internet.

[4] See Kathleen Dupre quoted here: <http://www.mythinglinks.org/Lammas.html>

[5] Graves, *ibid.*, p.178. Graves also asserts that Lammas, an alternative name for Lughnasadh, is nothing more than a corruption of *Lugh-mass* (p.301).

[6] Graves compares him to Dionysus, *ibid.*, p.301.

[7] See the Wikipedia article on Samhain at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samhain>

[8] Exceptions exist, perhaps most obviously in some Dianic covens.

[9] Versions date back to at least 1568 and the Bannatyne Manuscript

[10] Anon. There are many variants of *John Barleycorn*, of which the most famous is probably by Scottish poet Robert Burns; those of a certain age may remember the song and album from the 1970s, by the rock group Traffic.

[11] Graves, *ibid.*, p.302. Hutton sees the marriage rites as a seventeenth century construction, *op.cit.*

[12] Ancient Rome, for example, made a point of giving its populace cheap or free bread and when this wasn't available there would be rioting in the streets. One of the contributing factors to the Empire's fall was the loss of grain producing North Africa in the 5th CE. Living in the 21st century in a rich nation, it is all too easy to forget that the grain harvest remains a crucial event.

[13] The word is often spelt with an “F”, where *sam* means “summer” and *fuin* “sunset” or “end”. However, there is no general agreement that this is correct and some take the word to mean “assembly”. On the etymology of the word see <http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Samhain>

[14] It should be stated that no-one can be entirely certain of this, but it is a common conjecture found in much historic and Wiccan literature. Perhaps the most influential writer in this respect has been the Victorian Sir James Frazer, see *The Golden Bough*, Chancellor Press, 2000, pp.632-33. His views have been countered by Professor Ronald Hutton in *Stations of the Sun*, Oxford University Press, 1996 who has found no references earlier than the eighteenth century that attest to the idea that Samhain was the Celtic New Year.

[15] Frazer, *ibid.*, p.634. In Ireland and Scotland such practices were referred to as the *Féile na Marbh*, or the “festival of the dead”.

[16] Frazer, *ibid.*, p. 635.

[17] At any rate it was taken to mean such a thing by Sir John Rhys and Sir James Frazer. See Frazer, *ibid.*, p.636.

[18] Janet and Stewart Farrar, *op.cit.*, p.122.

[19] For those that don't know, Guy Fawkes (1570-1606) was a key conspirator in the plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament in London as a protest against anti-Catholic laws. He was caught beneath the House of Lords, arrested, tortured and executed.

[20] As always, it is obligatory to put in a safety message and say here that these things should only happen if properly supervised and whoever handles fireworks should be of a legal age to do so, some localities also prohibit them.

[21] When revising the lessons for publication as an e-book, I realised that use of the pomegranate in this ceremony derives from the late great Scott Cunningham's *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner*, Llewellyn, 1995. Although the ceremonial ideas and the way the pomegranate is used are different, an acknowledgement is still due I feel.

Appendix to Lesson 10

Making Bread

For those that wish to make a bread figure of the God at Lughnasadh, I have provided a recipe you could try. It is suitable for making a white or whole meal loaf, depending on which flour you use.

Ingredients

225g (1 ½ Cups) Strong plain white flour or plain wholemeal flour

1 level teaspoon salt

1 level teaspoon sugar

15g (1 level tablespoon) soft margarine

1 sachet (6g) easy blend dried yeast or fast action easy blend dried yeast

150 ml (2/3 cup) warm water

Method

1. Put the flour in a mixing bowl and add the sugar and the salt.
2. Add the margarine and rub it into the flour.
3. Add the dried yeast and stir it into the flour mix.
4. Add all the water at once to the flour mix and stir together using a wooden spoon.
5. Put the dough onto a floured surface.
6. Knead the dough until it is smooth and stretches easily.
7. Shape the dough into a figure of a man and place it on the greased baking tray.
8. Cover the shape with oiled cling film to stop it drying out and then put the tray in a warm place so that the yeast can work and make the dough rise.
9. Now set the oven to 230°C/450°F/Gas Mark 8.
10. When the loaf shape has about doubled in size (after about 30 minutes), remove the cling film and place the tray in the centre of the oven.

11. Bake the loaf for 20-25 minutes. It should be golden brown and sound hollow when tapped underneath.
12. Put the loaf on an appropriate surface to cool.

Chapter Eleven: Wiccan Beliefs about the Levels of Being

Wiccan Beliefs about the Levels of Being

Merry Meet and Welcome to the Class!

In this lesson you will learn about:

Witches' beliefs about the levels of being.

Continuing on, there is a research project for you to complete.

Finally, there is a blessing.

Levels of Being

This is not an easy lesson, either to write or for the student to get their head around. The main reason for this is the widely divergent views on the subject matter within the occult world and the fact that most Wiccans (either in published form or in discussion) are often vague about the topic, whilst acknowledging that it is both vast and important. I too would echo that it is fundamental to Wicca, as it is one of the bases of the Wiccan “World View” and much magical practice. It is also an enormous subject that I can not possibly do justice to in the space I have. Because of the widely differing explanations, I have presented a broad synthesis of the main viewpoints. No doubt this will not please everyone, and I am only too aware that a number of holes can be picked in the following paragraphs. However, I have done my best to explain things as clearly as possible and provided you, the student, with a reading list that is full enough to explore the subject further, in much greater detail, should you so wish.

Wiccan Beliefs about the Levels of Being

To all of us it is obvious that we have a physical presence on the planet. We have a body and with it we are able to see, taste, touch, feel and hear. More than this, we are able to experience life through our intellectual faculties and our emotions. We can think about our place in the world, and what we think impacts

on our feelings. Such is our conscious experience of our lives and our surroundings. Yet Witches believe that there is more to a human being than this explanation would suggest. There are other levels of being that are hinted at through experiences we have, that cannot be categorised under the heading of everyday consciousness. All of us have dreams that are created when we are asleep and unconscious. Some of us have past life recollections, or have seen ghosts. Others have had near death experiences and a spiritual revelation. And some just believe that we are spiritual creatures inhabiting a physical form. Witches seek to explain the composition of a human, and give a basis to the above phenomena, with reference to the Theory of Levels. Moreover, having such a theory is important for a variety of magical practices. Witches believe it is possible to travel through the levels and work with the energies met there, not only to effect transformations within the individual but to cause change to happen in the outside world.

However, explaining the Theory of Levels is not as easy as one might think, as there is not a standard hypothesis. Starting with the ideas of the Neo-Platonists in the 3rd century CE, Western thought has generally been of the view that humans are made up of a series of component parts that survive on different planes of existence [1]. This runs through many diverse theories, and it is possible to find Wiccans who talk of the theory of levels with regard to the Kabbalah, psychology (especially the theories of Jung and Assagioli), and the ideas of a range of religious philosophical thought from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some Witches even attempt to create a synthesis of two or more of these. All will be met by anyone making a foray into Wicca and it is important that the student has an overview of them. To this eclectic mix, I would also add ideas developed from Quantum Theory. Let us consider each in turn:

The Kabbalah

Not everyone who reads this course will be familiar with the Kabbalah. It is a vast subject that has been enormously influential in European religious and

philosophical thought for a thousand years. Originally a collection of religious notions from Jewish descent, one of the many ways the Kabbalah developed was into a system revealing the connection between all things. It has been used by magicians from the 16th century onwards to aid their practices [2]; it underpins much of the work of the influential 19th century occultist Eliphas Levi [3]; it was used extensively by the Golden Dawn in the formulation of their ideas; and it is widely embodied in Tarot cards used today [4].

Briefly stated, Occult Kabbalah is a way of explaining all existence centring on the great symbol of the Tree of Life. This glyph takes the form of ten emanations known as Sephiroth (singular Sefhira) that are often represented by circles or spheres. These are joined by twenty two paths. The Sephiroth are perhaps best explained as different manifestations of divine energy, whilst the paths are the routes that the energy takes. The highest level of energy, and the most rarefied, is found in the topmost Sefhira of the Tree, known as Kether. The lowest level of energy is found in the Sefhira Malkuth, which represents the Physical World. Kabbalists find the pattern of the Tree in all things, and it is possible for them to categorise a human being according to its scheme.

According to the Occult Kabbalists, the human soul has four major divisions: the Greater Neshamah, the Ruach, the Nephesh and the Guph. The Neshamah is further subdivided into three parts; the Yechidah, Chiah and the Neshamah Proper. In total this gives seven partitions.

Greater Neshamah

The Greater Neshamah represents the highest part of the soul. Yechidah is the top-most division corresponding to the Sefhira Kether and Pure or Abstract Spirit. Chiah is the life force, the Divine Will and the source of action; it is seen as a masculine energy in its broadest sense corresponding to the Sefhira Chockmah. The Neshamah Proper is the Intuitive Soul; it is seen as feminine energy and is found in the Sefhira Binah.

Ruach

The Ruach is the intellectual mind and reasoning powers; it is also will, imagination, memory and emotion. Self consciousness is centred here and Kabbalists often draw the connection between it and what psychologists call the Ego. It corresponds to the Sephiroth Geburah, Chesed, Tiphareth, Netzach and Hod.

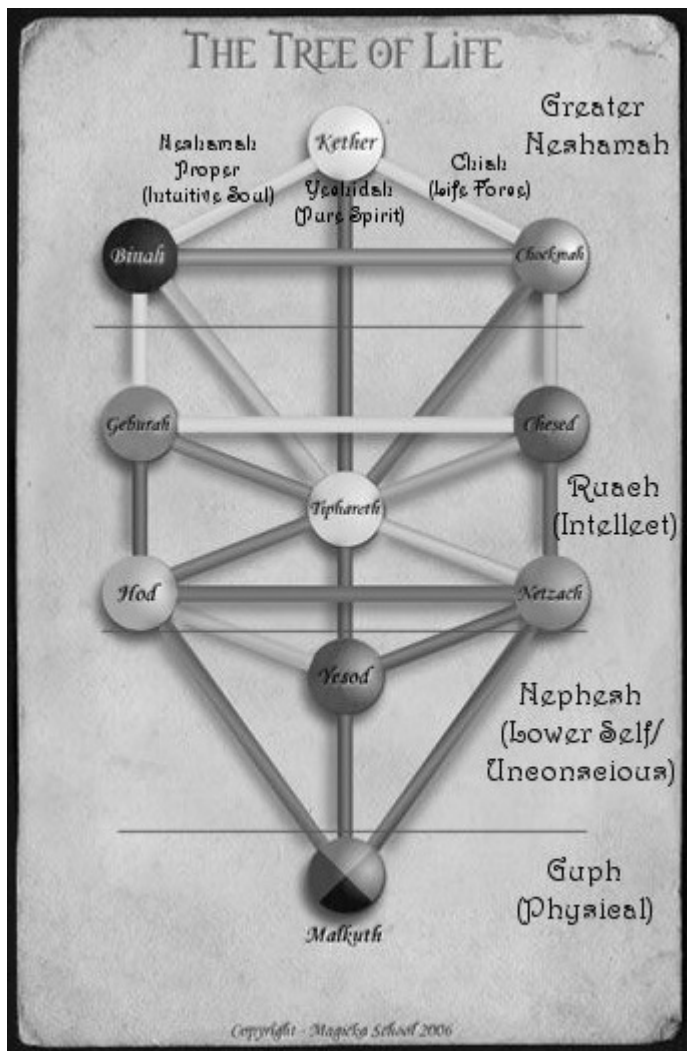
Nephesh

The Nephesh corresponds to the Sephira Yesod. It is the Lower Self and Lower Unconscious. It is the place of instincts and impulses, primary drives and vitality of being. It is the automatic storehouse of sensations. Every thought and every action leaves an impression in its wake on the astral energy. It is, therefore, a reflection and automatic record of past life. Here is found the Astral Pattern (or Etheric Double) upon which the Physical Body is formed.

Guph

Guph is the principle of the Physical Body and also represents a low stratum of the Subconscious. It corresponds to the Sephira Malkuth.

These levels of being are presented diagrammatically on the next page:



Psychological Theories about the Levels of Being

C. G. Jung (1875-1961)

There are few now in Wicca who will not have come across Carl Gustav Jung [5]. For seventy years Jung's theories have been widely incorporated into the occult, perhaps most importantly by Israelie Regardie who, in the 1930s, synthesised the Swiss psychologist's views with the magic of the Golden Dawn in the works *The Tree of Life*, *A Garden of Pomegranates* and *The Middle Pillar* [6]. Others

have followed in this vein in more recent times, such as the well known Wiccan writer and lecturer of psychology, Vivianne Crowley, in her works *Jungian Spirituality* and *Wicca* [7].

Jung sought to explain the totality of the human psyche, by which he meant the human mind on all its levels, and to this end he explored the Conscious, the Unconscious and the Spirit. He was quickly picked up by writers on the occult as many of his ideas were in agreement with their philosophies and served to illuminate them in a way that the modern world could easily digest.

Consciousness: The Ego and the Persona

According to Jungian psychology our consciousness is made up of two parts: our Ego and our Persona. The Ego is what we think we are and our Persona is the personality that we pretend to be. Neither of them is wholly the real us for we all have what Jungians term a Shadow. The Shadow is the part of us that we deny, either because we find it objectionable or because it does not correlate with our self-image. This part of ourselves we suppress into our Personal Unconscious and don't let see the light of day.

Unconsciousness: Personal Unconscious

Below the threshold of our consciousness exists our Unconscious. This is the place where all information that we do not consciously access resides. One aspect of this is our Personal Unconscious. In terms of physiology, this is the level of being that regulates our heart beat and blood flow, the cycles of repair and growth, our digestion, usually our breathing, and so on. This is also the place where all the memories of things we have forgotten are stored. It is the place that produces our dreams and it is also the realm to which our Shadow has been banished. Jungian psychologists believe that we must learn to confront our Shadow by finding a way to integrate it harmoniously into our consciousness by correcting and embracing it. They see that to leave the Shadow repressed and isolated from consciousness means that it can never be corrected and might possibly even be dangerous, as it has the capacity to burst out in unexpected and uncontrollable ways.

Unconsciousness: The Collective Unconscious

Jungians believe that below the level of our Personal Unconscious lies the Collective Unconscious. Here inhabit the experiences of life embedded throughout human history. One of the lessons of occult philosophy is that ultimately all existence is one. This is echoed in psychology, where it is believed that at a deep level humans are connected by a great sea of collective memories containing all human knowledge and all human behaviour. On a conscious level we are individuals, but in the Unconscious we are at some level all connected. The Collective Unconscious is the Realm of the Archetypes. Here exist powerful images that have the ability to transform and illumine; they are found in all cultures at all times, and have a commonality of purpose. There is the older shrewd person, the sun-child, the magician, the gods and goddesses of wisdom and destruction, the powerful monarch and so on. Jung believed that Archetypes had powerful transformational messages for our conscious minds.

Assagioli and the Super-Conscious

Modern occultism posits another level of consciousness in addition to those so far discussed; that of the Super-Conscious and the Higher Self. This is based on the ideas of the Italian psychologist Roberto Assagioli (1888-1975) who created the notion of Psychosynthesis [8]. According to him, the Super-Conscious or Higher Self is above the thoughts of the mind or sensations of the body, and is where all personal energy and consciousness derive. It contains higher intuitions, latent psychic functions and spiritual energies.

Occult and Scientific Viewpoints

Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Occult Philosophical Thought

This period produced a number of thinkers who saw that a human was composed of what may be termed “Subtle Bodies” or “Vehicles of Consciousness”. In the writings of the Theosophists [9], a human consisted of a dense Physical Body, an Etheric Body, an Astral or Emotional Body, a Mental Body (Concrete Mind) and a Causal Body (Abstract Mind). Beyond the Causal

Level it was seen that there was the Atmic, Buddhic and Monadic Levels which were of the soul or spirit. According to Max Heindel's (1865-1919) Rosicrucian writings, humans could be seen to have a seven-fold constitution [10]. There was the Dense Body, which was used to carry out tasks in the Physical World; a Vital Body, made of etheric energy that pervaded the Visible Body; a Desire Body, made of our emotional nature that influenced both the Vital and Dense Bodies; and, finally, the Mind, which reflected the outer world and allowed the Ego to transmit its commands and to order activity. In Rudolf Steiner's (1861-1925) Anthroposophical teachings the constitution of a human was made from a Physical, Etheric and Astral Body, beyond which lay the Ego, which he saw as the Immortal Soul or spiritual aspect of man [11]. All of these theories had common ground, in the sense that they all reckoned a human existed on a number of levels including the Physical, Etheric, Astral, Intellectual, Emotional and Spiritual Planes. They perhaps had their most famous expression in the writings of Dion Fortune (born Violet Mary Firth, 1890 -1946).

Fortune was a magician in the Golden Dawn tradition and a famed writer on a variety of occult subjects, in particular the Kabbalah and magic. Although not a Witch, many of her ideas have been influential within the Craft. In her books *The Cosmic Doctrine*, *The Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage* and *Applied Magic* [12] she wrote of a seven fold division of a human being. This has been picked up by the Wiccan authors Janet and Stewart Farrar, who incorporated it into their work *A Witches' Bible* [13]. The table given below is based on my own analysis of Ms Fortune's works. Her ideas are compared with those of the Kabbalah, as well as Jung and Assagioli [14]. It should be noted that this is only a tentative comparison as the systems do not harmonise completely and, particularly with regard to Jung and Assagioli, different placing of their concepts are quite possible. However, that such a comparison is needed is evidenced by the way many authors (even those most respected in occult circles) casually use terms from these sources as if the connections between them are obvious and interchangeable.

The table below attempts to reconcile a number of diverse systems.

The Constituent Parts of a Human				
Dion Fortune's Levels		Kabbalah	Jung	Assagioli
The Individuality This is the evolving and immortal part of us present in all incarnations	Higher Spiritual Unadulterated Spirit Divine Spark Essence and force	Greater Neshamah (Yechidah- Pure Spirit/Chiah -life force): The Sephiroth Kether and Chockmah		Higher Self
	Lower Spiritual Tangible Spirit	Greater Neshamah (Neshamah proper - Intuitive Soul): The Sephira Binah		Super Consciousness
	Higher Mental Ethereal mind. Voice of our intuition. Higher Self - personification of the Transcendent Spirit	Ruach (Higher Intellect): The Sephiroth Geburah, Chesed and Tiphareth		Middle Unconscious Field of Consciousness
The Personality Exists for one incarnation. The Individuality must take on these aspects to have a material existence.	Lower Mental Tangible mind. Certainty, Structure. Memory	Ruach (Lower Intellect) The Sephira Hod	Ego (what we think we are) Persona (who we pretend to be)	Conscious Self
	Higher Astral Ethereal emotions. Attraction. Aspiration for Unification.	Nephesh (Lower Self/Lower Unconscious) The Sephira Yesod/elements of the Sephira Netzach	Collective Unconscious	Collective Unconscious
	Lower Astral Instincts and passions. Aspiration to attract and hold. Ethereic energy/web behind substance	Nephesh (Lower Self/Lower Unconscious) The Sephira Yesod	Personal Unconscious Shadow	Lower Unconscious
	Physical Solid matter	Guph (Physical) The Sephira Malkuth	Physical	Physical

Adopting Quantum Theory

Although using Quantum Theory to explain the nature of human existence and spirituality is currently in vogue in some sectors on the Internet, it seems not yet to have been taken up seriously by any religious group. This is actually quite surprising given that Quantum Theory can be used in conjunction with the notion that we exist on different levels. In this sense, its fullest expression is to be found in the writings of J. L. Forberg and the following discussion relies partly on some of his ideas [15].

Quantum Theory was developed in the early twentieth century to explain the dynamic properties of sub-atomic particles and their interactions with matter and radiation [16]. The theory expounds the idea that matter particles are also waves and that they must be interpreted from the standpoint of probability; that is, the very existence of matter is probabilistic and has led scientists to talk of it in terms of “wave probabilities” [17]. These probabilities are spread out over a dimension that is more than space-time as it is space-less and time-less. Unmeasured, they are part of the information of this quantum dimension. However, when measured, or interacted with, they become part of the Physical World in the here and now, either in a wave or particle form.

If this is correct, that the nature of matter reduces to mathematical points of possibilities, it perhaps suggests profound implications for our human existence. Quantum particles occupy four dimensional space and also the quantum dimensions of possibility and information, which can be referred to as their quantum basis. It may be that as entities we follow the rules of quantum physics [18]. Forberg argues that particles are always accompanied by their quantum basis. So that when talking about our body we are actually talking about two bodies; the first lives in the material space-time world and the other inhabits the non-material quantum world. Both are located in the same material place as our “matter body”, as long as our consciousness resides within it. Forberg concludes that our physical existence is caused by a process whereby “our immortal consciousness and will...selects and assembles the quantum waves that will become the material body

we think of as “I.” [19]. Put another way, each spiritual entity exerts conscious pressure on the quantum information to cause it to become a material body in our four dimensional Universe. This has some obvious correlations with the theories discussed within this lesson where a human exists on different levels and the soul collects the ingredients necessary to enter life on the Physical Plane.

Terms Used in the Theory of Levels

Occult authors frequently use a variety of terms such as “Personality”, “Individuality”, “Astral”, “Ethereic”, “Mental”, “Spiritual”, “Soul” and “Aura” when writing of the levels of existence. Rarely in the generalist literature are such terms clearly defined, and it is easy for the student to be left with a vague impression. Seeing as these concepts are fundamental to understanding our natures as creatures, as well as comprehending the world around us and creating magic, this, frankly, creates great difficulty. However, it is hard to give definite answers as there is no standard use of these terms. The following section offers a number of definitions in the hope that when the terms are come across, students will understand to what is being referred.

The Personality and the Individuality

According to the “Constituent Parts of a Human” table above we are made of both a Personality and an Individuality. The Personality is composed of Physical, Astral and Lower Mental Levels of being. It has a definite female or male gender. The Individuality is made from Higher Mental and Spiritual Levels of being, it is immortal and is capable of going through many incarnations (In the *Wicca Advanced* book and course, the theory of reincarnation is dealt with in more detail). It is also bisexual, carrying within it female and male energies.

The Personality is the part of ourselves that lasts for one incarnation. We are made of a Physical Body that obviously decomposes on death. Our Individuality and what is left of our Personality (our Astral and Lower Mental selves) continues to exist on the Astral Plane for some time after our Physical Body has died. This idea originated and developed at the hands of the Theosophists, most notably

Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant, as well as Rudolf Steiner and some forms of the Spiritualist Movement. Wiccans believe that they will go to rest in the Summerlands on the Higher Astral Plane before the Individuality absorbs the Personality. From this point, the soul will either continue to rise through the levels towards Spirit or it will reincarnate and begin to collect mental, astral and etheric materials that it needs for re-manifestation on the Physical Plane.

When the Physical Body is alive it is possible for the non-physical part of the Personality and the Individuality to travel in the Astral Realms and gain a closer knowledge of Spirit than is generally possible in a physical form through Astral Projection.

The Astral Plane

“Astral” derives from the Latin word *astrum* meaning a star. It was used by alchemists and astrologers from the Renaissance period forwards to designate a super-physical medium through which the influence of heavenly bodies was felt on Earth. In the late 19th and early 20th century the term was popularised by the Theosophical Movement, especially in the writings of Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater [20]. For them, the Astral was the first metaphysical plane beyond the Physical, but was “denser” than the Mental Plane (see table on previous page). The Astral Plane is also sometimes termed the World of Emotion or World of Illusion. Generally, in Occult Kabbalah, this plane is associated with the Sephira Yesod, although it is also possible to speak of the “Astral Realm of Yetzirah” which gives the Plane a number of distinct levels related to the Sephiroth on the Tree of Life.

Wiccans believe that the Astral Plane can be visited consciously with the Astral Body. This is known as “Astral Projection” or “Astral Travelling”. Many people find that they can visit this realm by accident and have an out of body experience. This experience takes a variety of forms and usually happens when an individual is relaxed or dangerously ill. A large number of people report that they find themselves looking down on their body, whilst others have the unnerving experience of getting out of bed while their Physical Body remains sleeping. Those

that have had near death experiences sometimes talk of having looked on while medical staff attempt to save their life. Usually, during these events, people have visual and even auditory senses.

Some divide the Astral Plane into seven levels. The higher regions are thought of as being fantastically beautiful and correspond to what Wiccans call the Summerlands. This place is the resting place of the soul before travelling further upwards to Union with the Divine or collecting around itself the necessary components to effect another physical incarnation. The lower regions are known as a place of spiritual darkness. They are inhabited by those who are less spiritually pure, who must work on themselves on the Astral Plane if they are to progress either into incarnation or Higher Spiritual Realms.

As well as discarnate human souls it is possible to meet with animals, some of which have achieved individuality, whilst others are an expression of a group soul of their species. There are also Nature Spirits to be found. These are entities that are categorised according to the element of nature with which they have an affinity. Earth spirits are known as Gnomes, Air spirits as Sylphs, Water spirits as Undines, and Fire spirits as Salamanders.

The Astral Plane is very much influenced by thoughts and emotions, much more rapidly and noticeably than on the Physical Plane. This is significant for two reasons. First, like quickly attracts like, and it is, therefore, important to enter the Astral Realm with as pure a heart and mind as possible. Second, like creates like. The Astral Realm is full of artificial elementals created by human thought from the elemental essence of the Plane and these entities can take diverse forms that range from the beautiful to the menacing. Because the Astral Plane can be manipulated by thought, it can also be referred to as the Desire World, especially by those that follow the Rosicrucian writings of Max Heindel. He postulated that, contrary to the Physical World, force and matter are difficult to tell apart on the Astral Plane [21], and that it was made from a substance which can be described as a type of force-matter incessantly moving and responsive to the slightest feeling.

Commentators generally agree that normally one cannot manipulate the Physical Realm while in an Astral form, although bursts of energy on that plane can at times affect the Physical World as evidenced by *poltergeist* and ghost activity.

Accessing the Astral Plane intentionally while in a physical incarnation is generally seen as a challenging thing to do, although for some it can be easy. The technique Witches most frequently use is that of willing the creation of a Simulacrum. That is, the individual Witch concentrates on visualising their double before them. When that is achieved they then will their consciousness into this creation. Travelling in the Astral Realm can be a demanding and difficult thing to do, and the full method for astrally projecting is given only in Magicka School's *Wicca Advanced* book and course. The plane is fascinating to explore and endless in its limits. One of the dangers can be that a Witch ends up spending all her or his time traversing its levels, when there are more important things to do. For this reason it is essential to have a structure or itinerary. One of the best is provided by the Kabbalah and the Tree of Life although quite a wide knowledge of the subject is needed before the journey is started. Also, when on the Astral Plane, the novice can be attractive to entities that do not have good intentions and proper preparation should be undertaken in terms of performing rituals of protection, or enlisting the help of a Spirit Guide.

Etheric Energy

Witches regard etheric energy as being a web of near matter that provides the pattern behind physical manifestation. It can be seen as either a plane or sub-plane of the Higher Physical or Lower Astral Realms. When incarnating, the Individuality, and what is left of the Personality, must collect the necessary etheric energy to form the Physical Body. In Occult Kabbalah this energy is usually associated with the Sephira Yesod. Witches believe that etheric energy is the “life force” behind all existence and that in the human body it manifests itself as the human energy field or Aura. These ideas first took shape in the nineteenth century and were widely written about by Theosophists as well as Rosicrucians. At the time, they were partly supported by mainstream science that sought to explain the

transmission of electromagnetic waves through an undetectable and weightless substance known as the aether. This theory was discarded when the Michelson-Morley experiments in the late 1880s, based on the idea that aether was fixed and electromagnetic in nature, showed it could not exist. However, in the late 1990s a new (non-mainstream) theoretical and experimental field of research, called Aetherometry, was created by biophysicist and molecular biologist Paulo Correa and his partner Alexandra Correa [22]. This points to a description of the invisible aether, which permeates all matter and its subatomic structure, as dynamic mass free, non-electromagnetic energy. Matter can then be conceived as being aetheric energy imprisoned in electrically stable constructs. It could well be that this substance is the same as the etheric energy of the occultists.

Mental Plane

The Mental Plane exists between the Astral Realm and the Spiritual, it is a region composed purely of thought or mindstuff. Witches see that thoughts and consciousness are not just a by product of brain function, but have a reality independent of the physical. The Personality is partly made up of the Lower Mental, whilst the Individuality is made up partly from the Higher Mental. The Mental Plane acts as an intermediary between the Astral Plane below and the Higher Spiritual Realms above. In terms of Jungian psychology it is the plane on which the Ego and the Persona exist.

The Higher Mental Region is most importantly the home of the Higher Self. This is the Personification of the Transcendant Spiritual Self. It can also be referred to as our Intuition or True Will. This can be contacted through a variety of ways to help aid a number of magical practices (see the “First Steps to Working with the Higher Self” section below).

The Spiritual Plane

Spirit is only to be found in the parts of us that correspond to the Individuality and it is on this level that we are immortal. The Realm has two aspects; the Higher Spiritual which is the region of Unadulterated Spirit and energy, as well as our “Divine Spark” or Impetus; and the Lower Spiritual, which is the home of

Concrete Spirit -the Spirit Body of light that mystics refer to. However, discussing the Spiritual Plane beyond this is even more difficult than the other realms as there are more divergent views about this level of existence than any other. This is because describing direct spiritual experience in logical terms is self defeating as it is simply not rational; it goes beyond anything that the intellectual mind can grasp or be satisfied with. If we were to take a Jungian view of things we would say that it can only really be represented by the use of symbol and what a symbol means to any given individual will differ. It is perhaps, then, in the nature of Spirit to be elusive to describe. The best that can be done is to call it pure energy, pure love, or blinding light. Ultimately, we all come from this substance and to it we will return. In the final analysis, it is what we really are and governs all that we do. Knowledge of it can be approached through the Higher Self or Holy Guardian Angel. This entity can be seen as a personification of spiritual force or energy that will be intelligible to the physical human mind and is able to guide the individual in learning of the divine in its higher levels.

Soul

This word is open to many interpretations. Some equate it directly with Spirit, whilst for others it is something less refined. We follow Dion Fortune's definition that it is the inner aspects of the Personality (i.e. the Astral and Lower Mental Levels of being) coupled to the outer aspects of the Higher Self (i.e. our True Will or Intuition that can be symbolised by the transcendent spiritual personification of the Holy Guardian Angel) [23]. At death, the inner aspects of the Personality survive on the Astral Plane for some time. If a soul has been troubled in its Physical Incarnation it may wander on the Lower Astral Plane, sometimes becoming visible to those in the material world as a ghost. Other souls, who have had happier experiences, may choose to remain on the Astral Plane to greet and guide their brethren when their Physical Bodies have died, or else go and rest in the Summerlands. Eventually, the inner aspects of the Personality are absorbed into the Higher Self. From here the soul may reincarnate or choose to join with Spirit.

Aura

Some believe the Aura to be solely a manifestation of our etheric energy. Others, drawing on Theosophical thought, especially of Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, see that the Aura is composed of all the layers of being. These are referred to as “subtle bodies” and exist within and around the Physical Body. Each “body” has its own Aura and corresponds to a particular plane of existence. For example, the Astral Body is made from the substance of the Astral Plane, just as the Physical Body is made up of the elements of the Physical Plane. This is the interpretation that I would agree with, and it has important ramifications for healing work and travel through the levels of existence.

First Steps to Travelling Through the Planes and Working with the Higher Self

The following section uses my own adaptations of Golden Dawn magical practice. You will find that as you explore Wicca further, many of its best known techniques and rituals are descended, at least in part, from this Victorian magical association. One of the main purposes of travelling through the planes is to contact the Higher Self or Holy Guardian Angel. Directly linking the Physical and the Spiritual is important so that we can truly realise our nature as creatures and use the power of Spirit in all that we do here on Earth. It is also fundamental to the practice of magic. Work to effect this union comprises three parts: “The Pentagram of Life”, “The Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram” (LBRP) and “The Pillar of Balance” exercise. However, in this beginner’s course in Wicca only the first two steps will be given, the “Pentagram of Life” and the LBRP. Do not be discouraged by this or feel that this is being precious. As a responsible educator I have to ensure that students can walk before they run and I hope that this approach is appreciated. You could easily go out and buy a book that will give you a complete magical curriculum, but going for a quick fix will only be self-defeating as it is very important that time is allowed to become proficient in simpler exercises before more advanced work is undertaken. Magic and Wicca is not

something that should be rushed. For it to be of genuine deep benefit to you these things must be built up gradually.

“The Pentagram of Life” and the LBRP should be undertaken daily for maximum effectiveness and can be easily incorporated into your daily routine as they can be performed before and after your meditations.

The Pentagram of Life

“The Pentagram of Life” is very loosely based on the Golden Dawn’s “Qabalistic Cross” ritual. At first I considered just giving you the Golden Dawn material, with one or two adaptations, but the results weren’t pleasing, particularly as it is based on the pattern of a cross in the shape of a crucifix that seemed out of keeping with the spirit of Wicca. Nonetheless, the “Qabalistic Cross” is a powerful technique for bringing down spiritual light into the human body and I have retained the spirit of this at least.

Stand with legs comfortably apart and face East. Visualise a brilliant white light that just touches the top of your head. Reach up with your hand as if to touch this light and then bring it to your forehead (you could use your wand or athame if you want). This light symbolises Pure Spirit embodying female and male energies.

As you touch your forehead say the words:

“Great Spirit”.

Point towards your right foot with your right hand and intone:

“Queendom of Earth”.

As you do this, imagine the light descending from your forehead to your right foot. You should recognise that you are visualising drawing down Spirit into yourself on the Physical and Earthly Plane.

Raise the left arm parallel to the ground with hand outstretched and say:

“Transmitter of life”.

Imagine the light extending upwards from the right foot to the outstretched palm. Now raise your right arm and extend it horizontally like the left one. See the light extending from the left palm across your body and into the right hand. Say:

“Splendour of light”.

With the right hand point to the left foot and pronounce:

“Kingdom of Fire” as you do so visualise a ray of light descending to that foot.

See the ray ascend to the forehead. Touch your head with your right hand and intone:

“True desire”.

Clasp both hands together over the heart and utter:

“Shine through me ever”.

Extend your arms horizontally again. Visualise yourself alive with light in the shape of a pentagram and pronounce:

“Through day and through night”.

Bring your arms to your side and give a little bow to the East by way of thanks.

It is worth noticing that the pentagram is invoked in the direction of Earth to which the Goddess has been assigned. The words *“transmitter of life”* have been reserved for the direction of Water, *“splendour of light”* for the direction of the rising Sun in the East and Air, and the line *“Kingdom of Fire”* for the direction of Fire and the God. *“True desire”* pertains to Spirit.



The Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram

This ritual is designed to surround its practitioner with beneficial forces that have a spiritually protective and cleansing effect. It is based on the Golden Dawn's version which has the same name. It should be noted that while many Wiccan traditions recognise the Archangels invoked in this ritual, they are often not worked with on a regular basis. This is a shame as Angelology enhances many magical practices. As with the Goddess and the God, there are some who see these as literal figures and some who see them as archetypal representatives of forces from another plane of existence. Now is not the place to get into a big discussion about this, other than to say that, regardless of viewpoint, the magical methods in which they are involved are unaffected by how they are interpreted.

Stand Facing East. Perform the Pentagram of Life.

Still facing Eastwards trace a large banishing pentagram of Earth at arm's length following the diagram below.



Visualise its lines as being in a flaming blue or brilliant white light. Throughout this part of the ritual never let your arm drop. Power the index finger of your right hand (or your athame) through the centre of the pentagram and intone:

“Ignis et Aqua, Aer et Terra” (You can also use the English equivalent of these Latin words; Fire and Water, Air and Earth). These are the Four Great Elemental Forces of Life, of which all things are composed.

Turn to the South and trace the same pentagram. Power your finger through its centre as before except that this time you should intone:

“Great Goddess and God” (You can substitute your own preferred Goddess and God names here if you want).

Turn to the West and make the pentagram. Thrust your finger through it and intone:

“I will be”.

Turn to the North drawing the pentagram a final time and intone:

“You are the power and the splendour of all existence forever to the ages”.

Keeping your arm extended turn to face the East. Raise both arms so that your body is in the shape of a cross. Say:

“Before me Raphael” (pronounced Raf-eye-elle) and visualise the Archangel of Air materializing out of the clouds. The Angel is dressed in flowing yellow and violet robes carrying a caduceus wand.

Behind you visualise another figure and say:

“Behind me Gabriel” (pronounced Gab-ree-elle). Imagine the Archangel of Water walking out from the sea clothed in robes of blue and orange carrying a chalice.

Visualise on your right Michael the Archangel of Fire wearing flaming red and green robes and carrying a sword. Intone:

“On my right hand Michael” (pronounced Mick-eye-elle).

On your left see Uriel the Archangel of Earth who ascends through plant life and is dressed in robes of citrine, olive, russet and black holding a sheaf of golden wheat. Say:

“On my left hand Uriel” (pronounced Ooo-ree-elle).

Now intone:

“For about me flames the angelic pentagrams that serve to guide and protect me”.

Finally, repeat the Pentagram of Life.

As with your meditation work, when you complete these rituals you should keep a record of them in your Book of Shadows, making a note of anything that seems relevant.

Conclusion

“Know thyself” is the first tenet of many esoteric traditions, stretching from antiquity to the present day. In this section of the lesson you have learnt of the composite parts of a human being, as well as two techniques which at a later date can be used to have communion with your Higher Self. All these things will be important to remember, as much of this work’s magical theory and practice depends on a sound knowledge and exploration of them.

Research Project

The Archangels invoked in the LBRP crop up at a number of points throughout this work. For this reason it seems like a good idea to base this month's research project around them. On the Internet will be found many sites that deal with Angelology, some of them will be excellent and some of them will be poor and inaccurate. There are also a number of sites that, in addition to providing information, have beautiful artwork of these beings. What I would like you to do is spend sometime building up a picture of each of the Archangels. Try to be discriminating and verify the claims being made about them.

Make sure you consider:

- The Archangel's history. When is the first record of the Archangel? Have you checked the source given for yourself?
- What are the powers and properties of the Archangel?
- When was the Archangel given its rank and what does the term Archangel signify?
- How is the Archangel first described in terms of appearance and what they do?
- What does the Archangel have charge of?
- How has this description been added to or altered throughout the ages?
- How have they been represented in art? And where has this art been displayed?
- Has the Archangel been used in fictional writing or the cinema? How has it been portrayed?
- Are there any associated stories or myths about the Archangel?

As always, it is recommended that you write up your researches as an aid to forming your own views and memorising the material.

End Blessing

I hope that you have profited from this difficult lesson and that the basics of the Theory of Levels have been made clear. You will find that as you take in the information it will likely change the way you see the world and your place in it. How does it feel to know that part of you, and the others you care for, are immortal? That you and they only really “die” on the Physical Level? These really are life changing beliefs.

May the great Goddess and God show you the knowledge of a life that is divine, immortal and infinite.

Love and light,

Blessed Be,

See you next lesson!

Notes

[1] The Neo-Platonists developed and synthesised the metaphysical ideas of Plato in his Theory of Forms. They believed that the ultimate reality of the Universe is an infinite, unknowable and perfect One and that from this entity emanated various levels of reality.

[2] For example, it is an integral part of the writings of Henry Cornelius Agrippa, see his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, ed. Donald Tyson, Llewellyn, 2004.

[3] Even a casual glance at Eliphas Levi, trans. A.E. Waite, *Transcendental Magic*, Bracken Books, 1995, will reveal this to be the case.

[4] There are many such packs; for example, a modern deck that carries Kabbalistic symbols throughout would be Kay Stevenson's Spiral Tarot.

[5] Jung's ideas are perhaps most easily accessible in *Man and his Symbols*, Picador, 1978.

[6] Israel Regardie, *The Tree of Life, An Illustrated Study in Magic*, ed. Chic and Sandra Tabatha Cicero, Llewellyn, 2003. *A Garden of Pomegranates, Skrying on the Tree of Life*, ed. Chic and Sandra Tabatha Cicero, Llewellyn, 2002. *The Middle Pillar, The Balance Between Mind and Magic*, ed. Chic and Sandra Tabatha Cicero, Llewellyn, 2003.

[7] Vivianne Crowley, *Jungian Spirituality*, Thorsons, 1998. *Wicca, A Comprehensive Guide to the Old Religion in the Modern World*, Element, 2003.

[8] See Roberto Assagioli, *Psychoanalysis: A Collection of Basic Writings*, Arkana, 1993.

[9] A nineteenth century occult movement, the central figure of which was Madame Blavatsky (1831-1891), although the ideas on levels of being found their fullest development in the works of Annie Besant (1847-1933), see for example, Annie Besant et al, *Thought Forms*, Kessinger, 2003.

[10] Max Heindel, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*. This work is available for free on the Internet at www.rosicrucian.com/rcc/rcceng00.htm.

- [11] See his ideas in Rudolf Steiner et al, *How to Know Higher Worlds*, Steiner Books, 1999.
- [12] Dion Fortune, *The Cosmic Doctrine*, Red Wheel/Weiser, 2003. *The Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage*, Red Wheel/ Weiser, 2000. *Applied Magic*, Weiser, 2000.
- [13] Janet and Stewart Farrar, *A Witches' Bible, The Complete Witches' Handbook*, Phoenix Publishing Inc. 1996, *Part 2, Principles, Rituals and Beliefs of Modern Witchcraft*, pp. 116-117.
- [14] See Israel Regardie *The Middle Pillar, Part 2: The Balance between Mind and Magic* by Chic and Sandra Tabatha Cicero, pp. 131-135, for a discussion of how Assagioli links to the Kabbalah.
- [15] James L. Foberg, *Quantum Consciousness and your Immortality*, available for free on the Internet at <http://home.infiOn-line.net/~jforberg> .
- [16] Quantum Theory originated with the ideas of Max Planck in 1900 who suggested that light waves were emitted in certain packets called quanta. The theory has been redefined and added to over the years, most notably by Heisenberg, Schrodinger and Dirac in the 1920s. They came up with the theory of Quantum Mechanics, expounding the view that particles had a quantum state which was a combination of position and velocity; this led to a probabilistic interpretation of matter formulated by Born in 1926. Based on this, some scientists are of the opinion that the future is probabilistic.
- [17] See Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe, Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory*, Vintage books, Random House Inc. 2003, pp.105-8.
- [18] This is a controversial viewpoint and scientists are divided over whether or not Quantum Theory, which deals with subatomic particles, can be applied to larger scale objects.
- [19] James L. Foberg, op. cit., p.58.
- [20] See C.W. Leadbeater, *Man, Visible And Invisible*, Quest Books, 2000.

[21] See Max Heindel, *op. cit.*

[22] Paulo Correa and Alexandra Correa, *Why Speak of an Aether?* Akronos Publishing, 2001. There is a précis of this work at www.aetherometry.com/

[23] See Dion Fortune, *Applied Magic*, p.84.

Chapter Twelve: Self-Dedication, Initiation and some Final Thoughts

Self-Dedication, Initiation and some Final Thoughts

Merry Meet and Welcome to the Class!

Well, you have finally got here! This is the last lesson in the *Wicca Revealed Course*.

In this lesson you will learn about:

How to mark the end of your first year of Wiccan study

Continuing on, there is a research project for you to complete.

There are also further magical exercises for you to work on.

Finally, there is a blessing.

Final Choices

You have now very nearly completed a year long course in the basics of Wicca. The curriculum you have followed is broadly comparable to that of a First Degree coven Witch, although this course has been eclectic, non-denominational and designed mainly with solitary practice in mind. You are now very well educated in terms of basic Wiccan knowledge and, if you have been practicing the skills that you have been taught, you will have a very good level of practical experience too.

You are now at an important stage in your Wiccan life; having completed the basics you are in an excellent position to answer the question “Is Wicca for me?” There is no shame in saying no. You have spent an entire year studying and working as a Witch, living in tune with the Goddess and God and celebrating the rhythms of the great seasonal wheel. Ask your self truthfully, is what you have learnt the way you want to live? Do you feel affinity with the Goddess and God? Are you comfortable with the philosophy and practices of the Craft?

If doubts remain, or if it is not for you, now is the time to tell yourself.

Assuming you wish to continue, you now have a couple of choices to make. How are you going to mark the occasion and what will it signify for you?

Most Witches undergo rites of passage at certain stages in their Wiccan development. Many coven traditions have a system of three initiatory degrees that mark certain stages and lead to new horizons and awareness. Similarly, many solitaries can also undertake initiatory experiences.

It is important to state here that the acts themselves are not what create the initiation. This point is often completely missed in discussions over the nature of these rites. If you think about it, it is obvious that much training has gone on before the ceremony; a whole year's worth in fact. Any ceremony performed now is merely a high point in that process. However, this does not mean that it is not a profound event and there will be many who come to certain realisations through the culmination provided by this activity.

Traditionally there are two options open to you, both of which are initiatory; that of self-dedication or self-initiation. There are some commonalities and differences about what these acts stand for. Let us deal with the common ground first.

Perhaps the most important acknowledgement that takes place during either of these rites is that you are of the Goddess and the God and are a channel for their will. This can be a difficult concept to grasp. As you have learnt from your studies so far, all things derive from the One. Think of the Wiccan creation myth in the *Vangelo delle Streghe*, studied in Chapter Two of the course, where before all there was Diana:

“Diana was the first created before all creation. In her were all things...” [1].

At root we are all but part of this one force. Even the Goddess and the God came from the One:

“Out of herself....She divided herself. Into darkness and light she was divided. Lucifer, her brother and son, herself and her other half, was the light.” [2]

All creation is merely an expression of this eternal force and this includes you and me. This realisation has some profound effects. For one thing it relates you to all things, everyone is your brother and sister; every creature on the land, the fish in the oceans and the birds in the air are all part of you. When you see the stars in the sky and the planets in the heavens you are doing nothing more than looking out on your own body. As you are part of the One you can do nothing else than the One's will. Your sense of "I" is, therefore, in some senses an illusion.

Many will find this concept hard to swallow and will advance the argument that they are above all unique individuals. However, there is in fact no need to feel a threat to individuality. Think of all creation as a richly tattooed body that depicts an enormous tale without end. You are but one tattoo making up part of the whole; you are a conscious facet of the sum total and have a degree of autonomy within it. Although you do not give up a sense of individuality, the realisation that you are also in a real sense of "All" leads to a redefinition of "I". In fact, everything you sense is in a very real way "I". This can lead to a deeper appreciation and respect for everything you come into contact with, for all things are of the One and, as part of the One, all these things are of you.

Because you are of the One, you are also a channel for its will. When it is stated that the individual begins to learn to truly serve the Goddess and the God, it really means that they are working as a conduit for the energies of their own Higher Self.

It is often at this point that the individual begins to see how all things are connected and this can have the effect of opening a whole new way to frame reality. The system of dividing things into categories and sub-categories, (inherited from the Ancient Greeks [3]) whilst still having validity, can be placed against a backdrop of interconnectedness. Everything can be divided *ad infinitum*, but the converse is also equally valid; all things are one.

Why does this matter? Because all things are you, everything that you do profoundly affects the One and, although you may not realise it yet, you are capable of influencing the course of the stars. Sounds like exaggeration? Think of

the words of Aleister Crowley “It is impossible to drop a pin without exciting a corresponding reaction in every Star. The action has disturbed the balance of the Universe” [4]. Now, of course, you don’t need me to tell you that our acts are so tiny that on a cosmic scale no effect is observable. Nonetheless, the point remains that the largest things may start from the smallest of impetuses. Think of the Big Bang, scientists now believe that the Universe started from an infinitesimally small point. You are unlikely to create such a massive event but, small as you are, you are capable of giving an initial momentum to much greater things. What do you want to create? What things can you do to alter the course of things for the better? Within these ideas is the very heart of magic.

Along with these notions, self-initiation or dedication also points towards a sense of immortality. Often during this phase one confronts “the Shadow”. The Shadow can be summed up as the totality of one’s fears that at root are fed by a dread of death. Armed with the above philosophies it is possible to comprehend that one is actually immortal and that the Shadow and death are nothing but illusions. You are an expression of the One, the One derived from an eternal void, and as such you will live forever.

As you can appreciate from all that has been written, self-dedication or initiation is not a thing to be undertaken lightly. Many Wiccans describe these events as one of a death and re-birth, as the changes within the psyche can be profound and quite literally life changing. Although for others, the whole period of training may have been life altering and the initiation merely the icing on the cake.

Let us move on now and consider the differences between self-dedication and self-initiation. It should be borne in mind that the following couple of paragraphs are my own take on the subject and not every Witch, or group of Witches, will seek to define dedication and initiation in such terms.

Dedication

At Magicka I teach that this is where a Witch has completed basic training, is in agreement with what they have learnt so far and wants to undergo a period of consolidation before deciding whether or not to go any further in the Craft. Many, many Witches are perfectly content to put into practice the kinds of things you have learnt so far without advancing any further. There is no competition to be most skilled or knowledgeable Witch, no urgent need to get closer to Divinity, no absolute need to learn other Wiccan skills. This does not mean, however, that one does not expand. There is still much to learn about the areas so far covered and it could easily take you a lifetime to perfect these things should you want. If this sounds like the direction you want to take, then a self-dedication rite could be carried out. This is where you proclaim to yourself and the Goddess and the God that you are ready to accept them into your life and willing to serve them.

Initiation

On the other hand, at Magicka, it is taught that initiation is for those who want to learn of new things in the Craft. It is for those who want to make a statement that one period of training is over and a new one is about to be begun. It marks a recognition that there are many other things to learn of, that have not yet been touched upon at all or to a very limited extent. It is a time when you learn new things in earnest, broadening your range of magical skills and begin to develop specialisations. More than this though, it also marks a period when one decides to do additional work within the community. This need not be something specifically Wiccan, although it should be something in keeping with the spirit of Wicca. It will be a period when you begin to make deeper connections with others of a similar mind and, perhaps most importantly, a time when you learn to become ever closer to the Goddess and God.

The type of self-dedication or initiation you perform is very much up to you. With a dedication there is no need to have a ceremony if you don't wish to have one. Some will cast a circle and meditate on the significance of having reached this

stage. Others will say a prayer or two, some will take a ritual bath and others will perform a complete formal procedure. Initiation, though, is generally a formal thing.

The ceremony preparation hints below can be adapted for both dedication and initiation.

Preparation

Ritual Bath

Before the ceremony take a ritual bath as described in Chapter Nine. You may wish to think about what herbs you will use in the water, what colour candles you will burn and what kind of incense will linger in the air. Following the suggestions from Chapter Ten, you may have chosen a Witch name or created a new tool. If you have, think about how these might be incorporated into what you decide to do.

Location

Where will you go to perform your ceremony? There are no right or wrong places. Will you go outdoors, atop a hill? Underneath a grove of trees? In the shelter of a cave? Beside a stream or river? In your garden? In the lounge? Or in your bedroom? If just having taken a ritual bath, make sure that you wear appropriate clothing if the rite is to be outdoors –the last thing you need is to develop a chill.

Equipment

What equipment will you use? You may remember in the lesson on tools that it was stated that strictly speaking no equipment is needed at all. If you have decided on your ceremony being outside in a wild place this may be the appropriate choice, as lugging a bag of tools up a hill can take the edge off the ceremony, whereas if you are in your garden you have no such transportation problems.

Dedication and Initiation Ceremonies

The following Self-dedication and Initiation Ceremony share many similarities although at crucial points they are worded differently. Remember though, as with all ceremonies in this course they are only suggestions and not set in stone.

Self-Dedication Ceremony

Perform the Opening of the Temple, with any necessary adaptations if choosing not to use tools.

Say words similar to the following:

*“Great Goddess and God,
By the stars in the sky
And water oceans deep,
By the air around my head
And the Earth beneath my feet
I come here today
For a Witch are we to make.*

*I pledge humble service to my Lady
And steadfast allegiance to my Lord
Ever will I keep this promise,
Forever will I keep my word.”*

Meditate on the significance of what you have just proclaimed for a while. Remember that this is a recognition that from now on you will make a real effort to realise that you are as one with all things, and that you will now strive to listen to your Higher Self in all that you do.

Walk over to the East. Say:

“Raphael, Archangel of Air, guide me as I practice those things that I have learnt this past year and show me how to develop a deeper understanding of them. So mote it be.”

Next, turn towards the South.

“Michael, Archangel of Fire, keep my passion for living as a Wiccan burning brightly for eternity. So mote it be.”

Next walk to the West. Say:

“Gabriel, Archangel of Water, allow me to remain fluid in my approach to all that I do. So mote it be.”

Finally face North. Say:

“Uriel, Archangel of Earth, keep me grounded and safe in the knowledge of my eternal life. So mote it be.”

Next make the sign of the Goddess on your left forearm and sign of the God on your right forearm.



These can be made with anointing oils, mud and spit, charcoal –use whatever you have to hand.

Say:

“On my left hand are the powers of the Goddess, on my right the powers of the God”.

Next draw a pentagram on your forehead (you may wish to practice this first before the ceremony). Touch it with both hands and intone:

“Through me and around me run the energies of all. I am a true Witch at one with creation and at peace in my soul.”

Sit and meditate for a while on what you have just done.

Take down the circle.

The rite is now over. If you wish you can now celebrate in some special way of your own devising.

Self-Initiation Ceremony

The self-initiation ceremony is identical to the dedication above except that the words said at the Four Quarters are different:

Walk over to the East. Say:

“Raphael, Archangel of Air, show me how I can build upon the knowledge and skills that I have acquired, provide the opportunities to learn of new things so that I may expand my practice of the Craft. So mote it be.”

Next, turn towards the South.

“Michael, Archangel of Fire, keep my passion burning brightly for walking further along a Wiccan path for as long as I see fit. So mote it be.”

Next, walk to the West. Say:

Gabriel, Archangel of Water, allow me to remain fluid in my approach to all that I do. So mote it be.”

Finally face North. Say:

“Uriel, Archangel of Earth, keep me grounded and safe in the knowledge of my eternal life. Provide me with opportunities in this world where I may be of service to the greater good of all. So mote it be.”

Controversy

There are a number of issues surrounding reaching this stage of your training that I feel bound to make sure you are aware of, although many, if not most of you, will probably already be familiar with them.

On-line Courses

Some Witches can be terribly scathing about the whole idea of having been educated in Wicca On-line, or through a book, and will cast doubt on its validity, although there are also many who totally support it. As an On-line provider of magical education, and an author of courses, I am, of course, firmly in this latter camp. I believe that you have to learn Wicca from somewhere. What I have

provided has been carefully structured, deeply researched and reflects decades of practice. The Magicka School site provides a Forum where all aspects of your education can be debated and from where thousands of you can learn from each other. My aim has been to give you the means to think critically about Wicca for yourself and to take a large part of the responsibility for your own learning. I hope to have provided a basis from where you can stand on your own two feet and hold your own. If I have succeeded in this, then you will have no fear of those who may be tempted to sneer. Do not allow yourself to feel that just because you have received lessons On-line, or through a book, that you are any lesser a Witch to one that was educated face to face by another –if you have followed the spirit of the course you will have spent many hours studying and practicing away from a computer, or having your nose in a text.

Self-Initiation

Whilst there will be few who will question the validity of self-dedication, as defined in the lesson, you may well come across Witches who are not happy with self-initiation. This can be on a number of grounds. Perhaps the most difficult common criticism to answer is the notion that initiation at your own hands cannot provide the same level of support and deep contact that can be provided through initiation by others. For example, Vivianne Crowley likens it to an appendix operation that one may carry out alone but only if no doctor is around [5]. She also makes the point that it is perilous because one can't see properly what one is doing. Such opinions can be typical of those who are heavily involved in coven traditions [6].

There are, of course, a number of counter viewpoints that can be presented. The “support” argument presupposes the idea that those who self-initiate have not discussed initiation with others or do not enjoy the close contact of others of a similar persuasion. It also presupposes that the coven knows best and, of course, not all covens give high quality training. I would put forward the point as well that whether support was necessary really depends on the individual; many are quite comfortable with the idea of self-initiation. Also, a number of Witches will tell you

that the support they had during their initiation came from perhaps the best place of all, that of the Goddess and the God.

Another argument often advanced against self-initiation is that “only a Witch can make a Witch”. This is of course a fallacy; no-one initiated the first Witch, whoever they may have been. Further, the two seminal coven systems of Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca were both founded by men whose claims of initiation at the hands of others is open to question, especially perhaps in the case of Alex Sanders [7]. So it is likely that even the most well respected and widespread traditions today began with self-initiation. If self-initiation was good enough for them, why can’t it be good enough for you? It is also worth bearing in mind that a number of influential Wiccan authors, who have helped shape what the religion is today, have supported self-initiation to a greater or lesser extent [8]. Raymond Buckland, who was initiated by Gardner in 1963, is perhaps the foremost of these when he asks “How valid is self-initiation? ... how valid is it to you? ... if you wish to become a Witch and worship the gods; if you have no ulterior motives ... it is valid, and do not listen to anyone who says it is not” [9].

Where to Next?

OK, so you have decided to go ahead with self-dedication or initiation. But what will you do next? One of the things you may wish to do is to continue your studies at MagickaSchool.com. There are a variety of options that are now open to you.

Perhaps the most straight forward of these is to take the *Wicca Advanced Course*. This comprises of twelve lessons and lasts a year. It is designed to broaden your skills in a variety of magical disciplines including Herbalism, Divination, Astrology, Alchemy, Kabbalah and Crystals. By the end of it you will have an excellent knowledge of the main skills that are employed by Witches. You will have some fantastic jumping off points from which to forge your own path and specialise. More than this, the course will provide you with an overview of magical philosophy to a profound degree. You will truly appreciate how these magical

disciplines interrelate and appreciate just how well they explain existence. As a whole, the course is comparable to most Second Degrees taken by coven Witches.

As someone who has a good basic grounding in Wiccan knowledge and skills, I would encourage you to begin to think of some way that you can use what you know for the benefit of others. At the School we have a strong ethos of working for the good of the community and I hope that you have been encouraged to think along similar lines. This may be using what you know to give to your family, your neighbourhood or town. Of course not everyone lives in an environment where it is possible to be open about one's beliefs but it is not necessary to advertise one is a Witch; there are many things that can be done without announcing to the world a Wiccan status. Quite what you do, and the scale on which it is done, is up to you. Everyone is different and has different things to contribute. Think of something you can personally do to make the world brighter and improved. This may sound a bit "happy-clappy" but if everyone who read this book consistently did one thing to improve the lives of others then the world really would be a better place.

You might wish to do one the following. Remember though, they are just suggestions; you will no doubt have your own ideas.

- Sponsor a child who lives in a part of the world where just a few pounds or dollars a month will buy an education.
- How about supporting a project to bring a village a fresh water supply in a "third world" nation?
- Closer to home, why not volunteer at a local school and put in a couple of hours a week as a reading partner to a child who doesn't get read with at home or that needs the extra practice?
- What about volunteering for conservation work?

- Or how about recycling your rubbish and avoiding buying things that are in environmentally unfriendly packaging.

Although none of these things are Wicca specific, they are all in keeping with what it means to be a Witch and will all have a positive effect on life.

Research Project

For your final project, I would like you to consider what doing this course has meant for you and write down your thoughts into an essay. This is an important thing to do, as it lets you take stock of an important moment in your life and provides a snapshot for posterity that you can look back on and use as a yardstick for your progress.

Some things you might like to consider are:

- When you first came to this book 12 months ago what were your expectations of the course? How did you see your path? What were your expectations of yourself?
- What have been the things that you have found most useful on the course? What was most enjoyable?
- What things did you find hard?
- What things gave you the most satisfaction?
- If you could start the course over again, what would you do differently?
- What things will you take away and use regularly in your life from now on?
- Where do you see yourself in relation to where you want to go next?

Exercises

Housekeeping

This month take the opportunity to perform some Wiccan housekeeping. How has your Book of Shadows been coming on? What about your Book of Mirrors or your journal? Take some time to look through these things and make sure that they are in good order. Pay particular attention to any outstanding pieces of work that you have yet to complete; review these now. Are they things you intend to finish, or are they matters that can be now left to fall by the wayside? If you intend to see them through to their end, check to see that you have planned out how they can be finished.

Past, Present and Future Visualisation

Light a candle in your sacred space. Use any breathing pattern that suits you and spend some time mediating on the person that you were at the beginning of this course. How did you feel about Wicca? What were your aspirations? Have you fulfilled the things you set out to do?

Now see how you are in the present. Think about the things that you now know how to do. Think of the things that you have learnt.

Finally imagine yourself one year from now. What will you have become? What will you be doing? How will you have grown?

When you have finished, write down these three stages in your journal as “Before”, “Now” and “In the Future”. Underneath each heading, either take notes or draw what you saw in the meditation. In the “Future” section write down some ways that you will set out to achieve what you imagined for yourself. If you have found it useful, use the strategy given in the lesson on magic to shape your future (if you haven’t really tried it yet, revisit that lesson now and give it a go over the next few months).

End Blessing

First of all a huge well done!! You have done remarkably well to see through a whole year's course by yourself. It is actually one of the hardest things you can do as it has demanded a consistent approach to studying for months. If there is one thing that I hope, above all, that you will take away from this course, it is how to take control of your destiny and be an independent force for the betterment of yourself and others. I sincerely hope that you have enjoyed *Wicca Revealed* and hope that you are inspired not only to live a Wiccan life forever, but that you will also stay at the School either as a learner, a mentor or both.

I would like to welcome you as a fully fledged Witch. May you for ever walk in the blessed light of the Moon and the Sun. May your existence be bright, and magic follow you wherever you may be.

Blessed Be,

In Love and Light

Pino Longchild

Notes

[1] Charles G. Leland, *Aradia, Gospel of the Witches*, Facsimile edition, Phoenix, 1999, p.18.

[2] Ibid.

[3] *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert M. Persig is most instructive on this point and argues that our way of categorising things, inherited from the Greeks, creates certain limiting mind sets, and is not the only way to see the world.

[4] Aleister Crowley, *The Book of Thoth*, Weiser, 1999, p.87. Crowley is discussing his Adjustment Tarot card.

[5] Vivianne Crowley, *Wicca: A Comprehensive Guide to the Old Religion in the Modern World*, Element, 2003, p.92.

[6] Vivianne Crowley is a well known Alexandrian Witch.

[7] Gardner's claims of initiation at the hands of the New Forest coven have never been proved beyond doubt and it is widely considered that Alex Sander's initiation at the hands of his grandmother is untrue, something even many Alexandrian Witches will agree with. See in particular, Stewart Farrar, *What Witches Do, A Modern Coven Revealed*, Robert Hale, 1992, Preface to the Third Edition.

[8] For example, the Farrars' have a self-initiation section in *A Witches' Bible*, pp. 244-50. Vivianne Crowley supports it, although guardedly, see *Wicca*, p.92.

[9] *Buckland's Complete Book of Witchcraft*, Llewellyn, 2003, p.64

Glossary

Glossary

Alchemy

Alchemy has been present in many ancient cultures (Chinese, Egyptian and Greek) and has had a consistent presence in European culture since the Middle Ages. It has traditionally been thought of as the art of turning base metal into gold. However, even on a cursory examination, it becomes clear that Alchemy is also about spiritual transformation and knowing the divine. The famous Swiss psychologist C. G. Jung believed that Alchemy encapsulated in its images processes of the human mind and this has given the art its current vogue among the esoteric community.

Allegory

An allegory is a fictional work or artistic expression that has an important symbolic meaning that parallels the literal interpretation.

Angel

Traditionally angels are perceived as being spirit entities that act as intermediaries between the divine and the human. They are generally seen as being sexless.

Archetype

According to Jung “Archetypes”, or primordial images, make up the collective unconscious (see definition later in this glossary). They correspond to experiences such as confronting death or choosing a life partner and manifest symbolically in religions, myths, fairy tales, and fantasies. A goddess or a god can be considered as a kind of Archetype, as can many images within the Tarot.

Astrology

Astrology is the study of the planets and stars and how they affect life on the Earth.

Autonomous

Autonomous means “self-governing”. A big attraction of Witchcraft is that Witches can be their own rulers and there is little hierarchy in most traditions outside of a High Priestess and Priest.

Buddhism

Buddhism is a major world religion; it was founded in north-eastern India and is based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, also known as the Buddha, or the Enlightened One.

Ceremonial Magic

Ceremonial Magic is often referred to as High Magic. At heart it is a series of practices to effect Union with the Divine.

Chakric energy

Energy that emanates from one or more of the Chakras. The Chakras are energy centres within the body. Traditionally it is seen that there are seven of these located at the crown, throat, heart/lungs, solar plexus, sacrum and the region between the genitals and anus.

Charge of the Goddess

The *Charge of the Goddess* was written by Doreen Valiente. It is a poem, originally found in the *Gardnerian Book of Shadows*, and used widely throughout Wicca.

Christianity

Christianity is a major monotheistic world religion that believes Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the saviour of humanity.

Collective Unconscious

Jung believed that on a deep level all humans are connected. The collective unconscious contains elements of our race's experiences throughout history, it is the place where inhabit the "Archetypes". It is thought by some scientists that a collective unconscious may exist in some other mammals.

Coven

Traditionally a coven is a group of thirteen Witches that come together regularly for religious and magical practice. It is quite common to have covens with just three members.

Crystal healing

It is a common belief in Wicca that crystals have subtle electro-magnetic properties that help cure illness and disease. Others would also state that the colours of the crystals have a beneficial effect.

Cunning

Cunning-folk were known for a range of practices that included lifting curses and bewitchments, love magic, herbalism and curing diseases in animals as well as humans. A few also practiced Astrology. The term “cunning” when used in this context is not pejorative. Some modern day Wiccans claim such people were Witches and that they are their direct descendants. Others see this as quite an odd claim to make as there is actually evidence that Cunning-folk aided the persecution of those who it was claimed were Witches during the craze in the seventeenth century. On point see Jeffrey B. Russell, *A History of Witchcraft, Sorcerers, Heretics and Pagans*, p.97.

Deity

The divine, all powerful and pervasive force in creation, commonly worked with as the Goddess and God in Wicca.

Deosil

Deosil is a word of Gaelic provenance that means in the direction of the Sun or clockwise.

Demi-god

A being that is half divine.

Divination

The practice of foretelling future events.

Dogma

Dogma is an authoritative and precise statement of religious doctrine that is given as an unquestionable fact. Witches generally have a strong aversion to dogma.

Elements

In magic it is seen that all creation owes its existence to the four Elemental Forces of Fire, Water, Air and Earth.

Enochian Magic

Enochian Magic is a magical system that derives from the Elizabethan mage John Dee (1527-1608) and his accomplice Edward Kelley. It was developed by the Golden Dawn and some Witches choose to specialise in it. It is generally considered an advanced subject and is not recommended for beginners.

Equinox

The equinox is a twenty four hour period in spring and autumn when day and night are approximately the same everywhere on Earth. They happen on or around the 21st of March and the 21st of September.

Esbat

Monthly meeting of a group of Witches usually at, or around, the Full Moon.

Freemasonry

The largest fraternal organisation in the world, believing in a duty to God, one's country, family and fellow human beings. Much Masonic symbolism and ceremony has found its way into magical practice over the centuries.

Golden Dawn

Also known as The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a famous and very influential Victorian magical society, albeit one that was short-lived in its original form.

Greater and Lesser Sabbats

The Greater and Lesser Sabbats constitute the annular cycle of Wiccan festivities.

The Greater Sabbats, also known as the Cross Quarter days, are:

Imbolg (variant spellings include Immolg or Imbolc), 2nd Feb

Beltane (variant spellings include Beltaine or Bealtaine), May Eve

Lughnasdh, August Eve

Samhain, November Eve

The Lesser Sabbats are the:

Mid-winter solstice or Yule

Vernal (or spring) equinox or Eostre or Ostara

Mid-summer solstice or Litha

Autumnal equinox or Mabon

Higher Self

The part of one's psyche that is directly connected to the divine.

Holy Guardian Angel

One's personal angelic entity through which one may consciously appreciate the divine.

Herbalism

The study of herbs and their practical applications for magical, healing and culinary purposes.

High Priest

In a coven setting a High Priest is typically very experienced in Wicca and has the equivalent knowledge of a Third Degree Witch. Along with the High Priestess he will play a part in leading the rites and rituals. Not all covens follow this general rule though; some use a system of rotation where every male Witch will take a turn for a period of time. Usually a High Priest's duties extend beyond the circle in that he shoulders responsibility for administrative and organisational tasks, sometimes alongside the High Priestess and sometimes not.

High Priestess

Similarly a High Priestess is a very experienced Witch who along with the High Priest leads the ceremonies. Some covens though have methods of rotation so that all female members will have the experience of leading. Along with the High Priest, she will generally organise the day to day running of the coven.

Immanent

In Wicca immanent is a term applied to deity, which is believed to exist in all things throughout the whole of creation.

Initiatory system of Three Degrees

Many traditions of Wicca have three levels of attainment that can be progressed through, typically a year and a day at a time. This is achieved by a mixture of study, practice and examination. How the degree is conferred varies; some traditions allow self-initiation whilst others will only let it be given by senior Witches. Each level confers certain rights and responsibilities, although quite how these are defined varies from one tradition to another.

Invoke

Invocation can be described as “Calling-in”. It is used only for entities that are equal to, or greater than, the person doing the invoking. Invocation is only done within a properly constructed circle. Invocation differs from evocation, in that evocation is for lesser entities that are conjured outside of the circle, usually in a triangle.

Judaism

Judaism is the religious culture of the Jews and is one of the oldest religions on Earth.

Kabbalah

Originally a branch of Jewish mysticism that for centuries in the West has underpinned much magical practice. Its incorporation in Wicca owes much to the influence of the Golden Dawn. In the occult world its study generally focuses on the great symbol of the Tree of Life which aims to be a representation of all things, showing the order of creation and the pathway to Divinity.

Karma

Karma is a Sanskrit word that means “actions”. It is widely believed in Wicca that what one does comes back with equal force. Right actions equal right experiences. Karma exists on all levels of creation and is one of the principles behind nature. It

is often referred to as “perfect balance” and can be personified as a powerful goddess.

Levels of Being

Witches generally believe that humans are made from several layers or levels of being that are non-physical. It is generally believed that these can be worked with to effect magic and get closer to the Goddess and the God.

Neolithic Period

The Neolithic is a period of time that saw the origins of farming and a more sedentary way of life than hunter-gatherers had. It is typified by the use of pottery and of polished or ground stone tools.

Ogham

Ogham is an alphabet of Gaelic origin. It may have been named after Ogma, god of eloquence, who was champion of the *Tuatha De Danaan*, a mythical Irish race.

Pagan

The word Pagan derives from the Latin *Paganus*, meaning “country dweller”. It was a term originally applied by Christians to those who retained their old religious beliefs and practices. Today it is used to describe a multitude of native or “traditional” religions. Wiccans are often referred to as neo-Pagans to emphasise the fact that Wicca is a modern religion.

Pantheists

Pantheists believe that the God/dess and the material world are one. They see that the God/dess is present in all things.

Pantheon

A pantheon is all the goddesses and gods in the religion or mythology of a particular culture.

Patriarch

A patriarch is a respected male figure, be he a god or a human.

Polarity

Opposites

Polytheism

Polytheism means belief in many deities.

Prana

Prana is a Hindu word meaning “moving force” or “breath”. It is seen as the life force that circulates within the body and that may be breathed in through the air.

Priesthood

In Wicca every Witch is a priestess or priest and has responsibility for developing their own learning and practice.

Psyche

The psyche can be considered to be the whole of the human mind on all levels, conscious and unconscious.

Psychic

The word “Psychic” when used as an adjective describes the supernormal character of certain phenomena. When used as a noun it refers to a medium.

Psychic Protection

The mind exists on many different levels and during magical practice it can sometimes be vulnerable. For this reason those that practice magic do so in such a way that protection is assured. This should not be unduly stressed about; for example, crossing a road can be far more dangerous, but precautions are necessary and no Witch will work magic without having first cast a circle.

Psychometry

Psychometry is the ability to gain impressions from a physical object and its history. A psychometrist is the practitioner of this art.

Quantum

Quantum Theory is a branch of physics that attempts to explain the behaviour of subatomic matter. Scientists are divided as to how far the laws of Quantum Mechanics affect the behaviour of matter above the subatomic level. This form of physics is of interest to Witches as many things that Quantum Mechanics posits

correlates to occult philosophy as well as some forms of Eastern philosophical and religious thought

Reiki

A practitioner of Reiki places their hands on a patient with the aim of inducing natural healing. Practitioners will the Reiki energy, which they believe underlies everything in the universe, to effect a cure.

Seasonal Quarters and Cross Quarters

The seasonal quarters are:

Mid-winter solstice or Yule

Vernal equinox or Eostre or Ostara

Mid-summer solstice or Litha

Autumnal equinox or Mabon

The Cross Quarter days are:

Imbolg or Imbolc, 2nd Feb

Beltane or Beltaine, May Eve

Lughnasdh or Lammas, July 31st

Samhain, November Eve

Sabbat

In Wicca the term “Sabbat” refers to one of the eight seasonal celebrations based on the solar cycle.

Rosicrucians

The Rosicrucians are a large international fraternal organisation that pursue esoteric knowledge. Teachings include Kabbalah, Egyptian Hermeticism and Gnosticism as well as other occult beliefs. Like Freemasonry much Rosicrucian practice has been influential on magic in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Shamanic

A shaman is essentially a medium, who acts as a channel for spirits. Traditionally a shaman's work consists of healing and divination.

Skyclad

In Wicca there is a strong tradition of working naked, or Skyclad. This derives from Gerald Gardner who was a naturist. Most Wiccans believe that the human body is nothing to be ashamed of and many see that clothes can impinge magical energies. However, as Wicca becomes more and more in the public domain there is a growing number of Witches who now work clothed for most, if not all of, the time.

Solitary

A solitary is a Witch who practices Witchcraft by themselves.

Solstice

The Solstices are the longest and shortest days of the year. They happen on or around the 21st of June and the 21st of December.

Spiritualism

Spiritualism is the belief that the dead manifest in the material world usually through a medium or clairvoyant. Although it has been believed in since the dawn of recorded history modern spiritualism has its roots in nineteenth century research.

Talismans

A talisman is a deliberately constructed object made for working a specific magical purpose. Often it has complex symbols inscribed upon it, which constitute magical formulae.

Transcendent

In Wicca, deity is referred to as transcendent as it is generally considered to be unknowable completely. It may be as well that deity exists outside our Universe as well as within it.

Wiccan Initiation

See “Initiatory system of Three Degrees” above.

Wicca and Witchcraft

Some Witches draw a sharp distinction between “Witchcraft” and “Wicca”, seeing that “Witchcraft” is a set of magical practices that can be performed by anyone regardless of their beliefs and that “Wicca” is a formalised religion. Some go so far as never to use the term “Witch” to describe themselves, preferring “Wiccan” instead. Others, including many well known established Wiccan authors, blur the distinction and use “Wicca” and “Witchcraft”, “Wiccan” and “Witch” interchangeably. As a School we are in this latter camp, but we strive to make sure our students are always aware of other ways of seeing things.

Widdershins

When moving “widdershins”, an anti-Sun or anti-clockwise direction is taken.

Woden and Freya

Woden is the chief God in the Germanic pantheon and Freya/Frigg is often seen as his wife. There is debate among established sources as to whether Freya and Frigg can be considered as the same goddess; some state that at one time they may have been equivalent, others see Frig as Woden’s wife and consider Freya to be another entity.

Yang and Yin

Yang is the light, positive and masculine principle in Chinese philosophy. Yin is the dark, negative, feminine principle.

Reading List

Reading List

This is a general bibliography and is in no way intended to be seen as exhaustive or even inclusive of all seminal texts. It is hoped that the list will provide a student of Wicca with a number of high quality books from which to begin to build a reliable magical library.

General Wiccan Texts

Buckland, Raymond, *The Complete Book of Witchcraft*, Llewellyn, 2003. Buckland has created a generic version of Wicca that can be easily used by those wishing to set up their own covens. The work includes a large selection of basic ceremonies and often encourages readers to take a creative plunge once they have got the hang of things.

Crowley, Vivianne, *Wicca: A Comprehensive Guide to the Old Religion in the Modern World*, Element, 2003. Crowley was a student of Alex Sanders and tells many an entertaining story on the lecture circuit about her early experiences of Wicca. Nowadays she is a lecturer at the University of London as well as a Wiccan High Priestess and teacher of the Craft. This book provides a solid and accessible introduction to Wicca.

Cunningham, Scott, *A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner*, Llewellyn, 1995. Deceptively short and simple, this book contains many beautiful ceremonies suitable for the solitary Witch.

Farrar, Janet and Stewart, *A Witches' Bible, The Complete Witches' Handbook*, Phoenix Publishing Inc., 1996. Written by one time Alexandrian Witches, and very much with Gardnerian/Alexandrian coven practice in mind. Their work incorporates some of the best thought out ceremonial material around and is well worth a look.

Green, Marian, *A Witch Alone: Thirteen Moons to Master Natural Magic*, Element, 2002. Green's book is one of the best known guides to solitary Witchcraft.

Grimassi, Raven, *The Encyclopaedia of Wicca and Witchcraft*, Llewellyn, 2000.

Guiley, Rosemary Ellen, *The Encyclopaedia of Witches and Witchcraft*, Checkmark Books, 1999.

Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*, Harper, 1989. This is the best selling book on Wicca ever. It is both poetic and lucid with many meditative and spiritual exercises. Be warned though that its history of Wicca would make many a historian throw up their arms in despair.

Valiente, Doreen, *An ABC of Witchcraft, Past and Present*, Hale, 1986. A convenient alphabetical format makes this an easy reference work.

The Goddess and God

Anderson, William, Green Man, *The Archetype of our Oneness with the Earth*, Harper Collins, 1990. An underrated book that should have a place on every Wiccan bookshelf as it explores the Green Man and the idea of a male vegetation deity throughout history.

Farrar, Janet and Stewart, *The Witches' Goddess: The Feminine Principle of Divinity*, Hale, 1987. An excellent book that sets the divine feminine in historical context (from a Wiccan point of view) and provides detailed coverage of many female deities. A number of useful rites and ceremonies are included as well.

Farrar, Janet and Stewart, *The Witches' God*, Phoenix Publishing Inc 1989. A similarly excellent work that achieves the same depth of coverage for the Witches' God.

Historical Background

Hutton, Ronald, *Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*, Oxford paperbacks, 2001. Hutton's well researched book exposes many myths that Wiccans base their rituals on. The response of many Witches has been to re-examine their seasonal celebrations and incorporate some of his findings into their practices.

Hutton, Ronald, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles: Their Nature and Legacy*, Blackwell, 1993. A ground breaking look at religious beliefs in the British Isles from the Stone Age to the coming of Christianity.

Hutton, Ronald, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, Oxford University Press, 1999. This is the most thorough and balanced history of Wicca yet produced. Always fair and judicious, Hutton lays bare a number of Wiccan myths. If there is one book that you buy on the history of Witchcraft then this is it.

Maxwell-Stuart, P. G., *Witchcraft a History*, Tempus, 2000. Maxwell-Stuart looks at Witchcraft in Greece, Rome and the Christian era as well as the present day.

Russell, Jeffrey B., *A History of Witchcraft: Sorcerers, Heretics and Pagans*, Thames and Hudson, 1991. Russell surveys Witchcraft throughout different times and societies and includes a couple of chapters devoted to Wicca.

Spiritual Psychology

Assagioli, Roberto, *Psychosynthesis: A Collection of Basic Writings*, Arkana, 1993. Assagioli has many things to say about human psychology and the levels of the mind as well as the importance and function of the human will.

Crowley, Vivianne, *Jungian Spirituality*, Thorsons, 1998. A famous Witch's take on Jungian psychology and how it relates to spirituality.

Jung, C. G. ed., *Man and his symbols*, Picador, 1978. Jung's work is essential reading for all interested in Wicca and magic.

Magic and Ritual

Cicero, Chic and Sandra Tabatha, *Self-Initiation into the Golden Dawn Tradition*, Llewellyn, 2003

Fortune, Dion, *Applied Magic*, Weiser, 2000. A useful introduction to this work is given by well-known occult author Gareth Knight.

Crowley, Aleister, *777 and other Qabalistic Writings*, Weiser, 1986. The main source for correspondences used in today's magical world.

Levi, Eliphas, A.E. Waite trans, *Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual*, Bracken Books, 1995.

MacGregor Mathers, S.L. trans., *The Key of Solomon the King, (Clavicula Salomonis)*, Weiser, 1990. This is perhaps the most famous and widely used of all ancient magical grimoires and has served as a basis for Golden Dawn magical rites as well as those of Wicca. You will find much between its pages that works and much that, quite frankly, is of little worth. You will also find concoctions of the “blood of bat, ear of dog” variety, which, perhaps needless to say, no Wiccan subscribes to or recognises. Used with care it can be a fascinating thing to explore.

Regardie, Israel, edited and annotated by Chic Cicero and Sandra Tabatha Cicero, *The Middle Pillar, The Balance Between Mind and Magic*, Llewellyn, 2003. A book that amongst many other things shows how Chakras and Kabbalah can be combined.

Regardie, Israel, *The Tree of Life, An Illustrated Study in Magic*, ed. Chic and Sandra Tabatha Cicero, Llewellyn, 2003. This is still the best introduction to the subject of magic both for its scope and erudition and, although written by a master of Golden Dawn magic, it is nonetheless of great interest to Wiccans. The version annotated by the Cicero’s is the one to get as it keeps the old magus’ words fresh and alive.

Valiente, Doreen, *Natural Magic*, St Martin’s Press, 1975.

One of the greatest books on magic ever written is Aleister Crowley, *Magick*, edited, annotated and introduced by John Symonds and Kenneth Grant, Guild publishing 1986. It should be borne in mind that the reader will have to put up with Crowley’s occasional tirades against women and racist attitudes. One should also be very wary of some of his teachings on the Kabbalah (particularly the eleven Kabbalistic knocks) as they are purposely misleading. Also his comments about child sacrifice refer to sperm and not “male children”. All these factors make it not really suitable for a beginner but it has been put here for the sake of completeness.

Influential Texts on the Development of Wicca

Blavatsky, Helena Petrona, *Isis Unveiled*, Theosophical University Press, 1972.

Blavatsky, Helena Petrona, *The Secret Doctrine, A Synthesis of Science Religion and Philosophy*, Theosophical University Press, 1984.

Both books were originally published in the nineteenth century.

Fortune, Dion, *The Cosmic Doctrine*, Red Wheel/Weiser, 2003.

Fortune, Dion, *The Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage*, Red Wheel/ Weiser, 2000.

Frazer, Sir James, *The Golden Bough, A History of Myth and Religion*, one volume edition, Chancellor, 2000. A free On-line version can be found here:<http://www.bartleby.com/196/> , please note this is the 1922 edition.

Graves, Robert, *The White Goddess*, Faber and Faber, 2000. Grave's White Goddess is one of the bedrocks on which modern Wicca is founded. In this book the idea of the Celtic Tree Calendar is born.

Leland, Charles G, .Aradia, *Gospel of the Witches*, Phoenix Publishing Inc, 1999. This text was widely used by Doreen Valiente as a source of inspiration for a number of Wiccan rituals and prayers. Many Wiccans today make use of the creation myth that it contains.

Murray, Margaret, *The God of the Witches*, Oxford University Press, 1970. As students will be aware Murray's work is widely discredited by academics but it is still an interesting read for Witches who want to have knowledge of works that inspired Gerald Gardner and Doreen Valiente in their development of modern Wicca.

Wallis Budge, E. A., *Egyptian Magic*, Arkana, 2003. This little book was written by the foremost Victorian Egyptologist in 1899. Budge is perhaps most famous for having translated the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* or *Book of Coming Forth by Day*, as it should more correctly be referred to. The role Budge has played (albeit completely unwittingly) in modern magic is a story untold. His works have been drawn on frequently and often without acknowledgement by many occultists. If read between the lines, *Egyptian Magic* gives details of many magical practices of value and is also a fascinating historical read.

Healing

Brennan, Barbara Ann, and. Smith, Jos A, Illus., *Hands of Light: Guide to Healing Through the Human Energy Field*, Bantam, 1993. Brennan looks at “bioenergetic” healing - and gives specific techniques in working with the human energy field.

Krieger, Dolores, *The Therapeutic Touch: How to Use Your Hands to Help to Heal*, Prentice Hall & IBD, 1992. The bestselling work from one of the top exponents of Touch Therapy.

Herbs

Cunningham, Scott, *Encyclopaedia of Magickal Herbs*, Llewellyn, 1985.

Metcalf, Joannah, *Herbs and Aromatherapy*, Bloomsbury Books, London, 1993. Useful book to consult when thinking of adding herbs and essential oils to baths.

Astrology

Parker, Julia and Derek *Parker's Astrology, The Definitive Guide to Using Astrology in Every Aspect of Your Life*, DK, 2004. An excellent introduction to Astrology.

Cashford, Jules, *The Moon: Myth and Image*, Cassell Illustrated, 2003. An exploration of the myths, symbols and poetic images which have been inspired by the Moon.

